

**POLITICS AND
NATIONALIST AWAKENING
IN SOUTH INDIA, 1852-1891**

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**In Memory of My Father
and
To My Mother**

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ABBREVIATIONS

ARGMU	Annual Report from the Governors of Madras University
GOI	Government of India
GOM	Government of Madras
IHP	India Home Proceedings
JPP	Judicial and Public Proceedings
MEP	Madras Educational Proceedings
MJP	Madras Judicial Proceedings
MLP	Madras Legislative Proceedings
MNA	Madras Native Association
MNNR	Madras Native Newspaper Reports
MPP	Madras Public Proceedings
MRP	Madras Revenue Proceedings
PPHC	Parliamentary Papers House of Commons
PPHL	Parliamentary Papers House of Lords
PSC	Public Service Commission
RAMP	Report on the Administration of the Madras Presidency
RINC	Report of the Indian National Congress
RPIMP	Report on Public Instruction in the Madras Presidency

Introduction

PRE-COLONIAL ENVIRONMENT

The part of India that lies to the south of the Vindhya mountains embraces an area of considerable environmental complexity. In its physical structure, it has been described as "a vast shield area, comparable in a host of ways to the Laurentian Shield of North America."¹ Its landscape is dominated by the two major mountain systems called the Western and Eastern Ghats. The Western Ghats, extending from Tapti valley to Cape Comorin in the deep south, consist of a steep and rugged mass of hills clothed by some of the heaviest forests found in the entire subcontinent. Enclosed between the Western Ghats and the Arabian Sea is a narrow coastal tract which constitutes the core of the Kerala region and the littoral part of the Kannada country. The Eastern Ghats, by comparison, are of much lower elevation and are breached at a number of points by the great rivers of South India, especially the Godavary, Krishna, and Kaveri. It is precisely at these points that the coastal plain attains its greatest width, forming delta basins which have always been the most fertile and populous areas of South India. While the delta basins of the Godavary and Krishna formed the center for traditional Telugu culture, the Kaveri delta and the littoral plain to the north constituted the

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nucleus of the ancient Tamil civilization. Situated between the coastal plains on either side of the peninsula is the Deccan, a rolling plateau country studded with hills and intersected by narrow valleys.²

The regions of South India derive their unity from linguistic and historical evolution. Kerala is, perhaps, the most distinctive of the regions of peninsular India. Lying in the extreme southwest corner of the subcontinent, Kerala owed its identity to language: Malayalam. This language evolved from a slow fusion of Tamil and Sanskritic elements, occurring simultaneously with the Aryan cultural penetration into the region. A distinct Malayalam alphabet came into existence about the eleventh century, and, subsequently, a rich literature developed as well. The growth of an autonomous literary tradition was in some measure encouraged by Kerala's physical separation from the eastern regions of the peninsula, a separation imposed by the towering peaks of the western Ghats. Though this isolation was never absolute, there were nonetheless severe restrictions on the free movement of peoples and ideas. Cultural contacts remained minimal, and Kerala was largely insulated from the political encroachments of ambitious powers based on the eastern regions. In fact, for more than a millennium the people of Kerala were left free to develop and nurture an ethos all their own, the uniqueness of which was reflected in their caste and matrilineal arrangements.

However, the rigors of landward isolation were mitigated to some extent by Kerala's exposure to maritime influences. With its deep and sheltered harbors, Kerala had long been the focal point of traders from distant parts of the world. Arabs, Greeks, Romans, and Persians had frequented these ports since the beginnings of the Christian era, and their demands had popularized such crops as pepper and spices. Indeed, it was these products which brought Vasco da Gama to Kerala in 1498, thereby inaugurating the era of Western imperialism.

which was eventually to engulf much of Asia and Africa. The impact of the maritime influence was not confined to trade and politics alone. It also introduced new religious elements which gave Kerala's population a distinctively polyglot character. Among the important non-Hindu communities found in this region are Muslims, Syrian Christians, Catholics, and Protestants, who together constituted almost two-fifths of Kerala's population by the 1960s.³

Tamilnadu, Kerala's eastern neighbor, derived its unity as much from its historical past as from its present language. In the development of Tamilnadu's history, literature, and sacred traditions, it is possible to discern some of the processes of Tamil regionalism functioning as far back as the beginnings of the Christian era. By A.D. third century, during the Sangam period, this extreme, southeastern corner of the Indian subcontinent had come to inherit an advanced Tamil culture when society had broken away from its tribal moorings, when monarchial rule became the prevalent form of government, when academies were founded to promote Tamil literature and the arts, and when Tamil language was becoming the standardized medium of communication among a people lacking political or geographical unity. In subsequent centuries, although Tamil language came to feel the impact of Sanskrit and many Sanskrit words entered the language, it did not surrender its autonomy in structure, script, or speech patterns. What occurred in the sphere of language was true of other aspects of Tamil cultural life. Though there was selective borrowing and adaptation from a variegated Aryan culture, the Tamils continued to retain much of their regional myths and symbols.⁴

Tamilnadu, however, had always concealed important internal contrasts which stemmed mainly from physical and climatic factors. The basic contrast was between the dry interior plateau country and the wet coastal plain. The former, bounded by the districts of Salem and Coimbatore, is a rainshadow

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area where neither the southwest nor the northeast monsoon is able to penetrate. The nature of the terrain and the low rainfall ruled out wet rice cultivation in this area. Emphasis was on dry grains, especially millet, which was the staple food. The coastal plain, embracing the districts of Chingleput, North Arcot, South Arcot, Trichinopoly, Tanjore, Madura, and Tinnevelly, was on the whole better endowed in terms of soil fertility and rainfall. Wet rice cultivation here was supplemented with cash crops like indigo, cotton, sugarcane, and groundnuts. Not surprisingly, the bulk of Tamilnadu's inhabitants lived in this favored coastal tract, notably, in the Kaveri delta, where fertile alluvial soils and elaborate irrigational works had long permitted intensive cultivation.⁵

Andhra, the land of the Telugus, is the third linguistic region of importance in South India. It is territorially more extensive than the neighboring regions and embraces both the coastal plain stretching from Nellore to Ganjam as well as the large tracts of interior plateau country containing the districts of Cuddapah, Kurnool, Anantapur, and the eastern parts of Hyderabad State. Despite these environmental differences, the existence of a single written script has given a sense of unity to the entire region. Telugu language is without doubt Dravidian in origin, although in the course of its evolution it was heavily impregnated by Sanskritic elements. In all probability, the language originated in the deltaic basins of the Godavary and Krishna and from here it was carried into the interior plateau country by migrating, cultivating castes in search of arable land. In the fourteenth century, when Vijayanagar reigned politically supreme over much of the peninsula, Telugu literature enjoyed its golden age under royal patronage. Since then, Telugu language became an important focus of community identification, overriding differences caused by physical and economic phenomena.⁶

Although regional contrasts loom large in any discussion of the ecology and linguistic traditions of South India, it must, nonetheless, be recognized that there are countervailing forces contributing towards the unity of the peninsula. In a real sense, unity and diversity are overlapping categories whose interplay, according to Selig Harrison, "is the grand pattern of Indian history."⁷ The elements of unity in South India are to be traced principally to Hinduism and its social institution, the caste system, both of which have posited a common body of religious and social values that have transcended geographical and linguistic boundaries.

Hinduism is so perplexingly amorphous, if pluralistic, that writers despair in their efforts to describe it. "No religion," writes Drekmeyer, "is more protean, more resistant to description."⁸ Evidence of its pluralistic nature might be found in its heterodox doctrines, its complex rites and practices, and its belief in many paths to salvation.

One aspect of Hindu pluralism is manifested in its sectarian groupings. In South India, the principal Hindu sects were the Vaishnavites and Saivites, the former predominant in Andhra and the latter in Tamilnadu and Kerala. These sects had in turn splintered into numerous, smaller groupings. The Vaishnavites, for instance, were divided into a number of schools, of which the most important were the Sri Vaishnavas and Madhvās.

Though there were differences in ceremony and doctrine between these two subsects, they, nonetheless, sprang from a single, great, devotional movement which began to sweep the Indian subcontinent after the eighth century A.D. Originating in Tamilnadu and drawing inspiration from numerous saints and such Dravidian Vaishnavite theologians as Ramanuja and Madhva, the devotional movement demanded a total surrender to God, denied the importance of rituals, mitigated some of the harsh inequalities of the caste system, and invested

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Hinduism with a framework of organization modelled on Buddhism. Its long-term significance lay as much in stimulating religious enthusiasm among the masses through preaching in the regional languages as in enlisting recognition among the rival sectarian orders of the essential unity of Hinduism.⁹

Although the influences which shaped the devotional movement were largely Vaishnavite, the contribution of Saivism should not be underestimated. Among the various Saivite groups in South India, that which was least affected by the bhakti movement was the Smartha sect, the followers of the monistic teachings of Sankaracharya. A Nambudiri Brahmin from Kerala, Sankaracharya was among the earliest to recognize the importance of the devotional school and in fact had reputedly composed devotional poems in Sanskrit. His major achievement, however, was his exposition of the Vedanta, which he produced by reworking the contradictory doctrines contained in the Upanishads.¹⁰ Sankaracharya's intellectual rigorousness and brilliance won admiration among Brahmins who saw in the Vedanta a philosophical system superior to anything that rival Hindu schools could offer. Preoccupation with logic and philosophical speculation, however, evoked little enthusiasm among the non-Brahmin Saivites who found in Saiva Siddhanta and Vira Saivism a more congenial home. Both these sects had enriched the quality of the devotional movement in South India, especially by their concern with developing the spiritual and ethical aspects of religion. They denied the importance attached to rituals and caste distinctions, disowned polytheism, and advocated the true love of the Supreme God, Siva. Vira Saivism, however, carried the revolt against the sacerdotal tradition much further by questioning the sanctity of the Vedas and challenging the primacy of the Brahmins in the ritual order. That Vira Saivism was frankly anti-Brahmin cannot be seriously doubted, and this view is confirmed by the fact that it found a receptive hearing principally among the non-Brahmin

cultivating and trading castes of the Kannada region.¹¹

It is not intended to suggest that sectarian groupings in South India were essentially a function of underlying social conflicts generated by the caste system. Little conclusive evidence is forthcoming to suggest such an assertion. Nonetheless, it is a characteristic of Hindu society that sectarian groupings, to some extent, developed along fissures created by caste. That this is not entirely fortuitous is suggested by the wide disparities that existed in status, roles, and wealth between the elite Brahmin castes and the rest of Hindu society.

Hindu society in South India, despite linguistic and sectarian cleavages, shared one feature, namely, that the ritually dominant group everywhere was drawn from the Brahmin caste. Richard Temple, writing in 1882, asserted that: in Bengal, Brahmin influence was moderated by the trading and literary castes; in the North-Western Provinces by the Rajputs and Muslims; and in Bombay, by the Parsis and Jains; in Maharashtra and South India, Brahmin influence was absolute, with the other castes in a position of almost total subservience.¹² A recent study on Maharashtra by Kumar affirms the validity of Temple's remark. Kumar depicts Chitpavan Brahmins exercising decisive influence over the other castes through their control of "the significant concentrations of power in society, namely, the institutions of religion, the administration and the ownership of land."¹³

In South India, the influence of the Brahmins was no less decisive. Despite their division into a number of endogamous groups, which were unevenly distributed over the peninsula, the Brahmins asserted their supremacy on account of their high ritual status, their ownership of land, and their control of some of the key administrative positions in rural society. In the Andhra region, for example, the most important groups were the Niyogi Brahmins, settled predominantly in the Northern

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Circars. Through occupation of the best arable land in the area and their exclusive control of the key position of the *karnam* (village accountant), the Niyogis were able to sustain their power over many centuries during which they provided continuous local leadership in the Northern Circars.¹⁴ In Tamilnadu, the Smartha and Sri Vaishnava Brahmins enjoyed a comparable status, especially along the coastal tracts and in localities where the great Hindu temples were situated. In particular, they were important in the Kaveri delta, which had been the recipient of successive waves of Brahmin colonists of different regional extraction, including, Telugu, Desastha, Konkanese, Gujerati, and Kanarese. The most numerous were the Tamil Brahmins, divided into three categories: the Vedic Brahmins, domestic priests, and temple priests. The Vedic Brahmins enjoyed the highest status and they were drawn exclusively from Smarthas and Sri Vaishnavas. Traditionally associated with learning and cultural activities, the Vedic Brahmins sustained themselves from revenues of landed endowments granted by ruling princes and other Hindu patrons.¹⁵ In Kerala, the Nambudiri Brahmins formed the dominant caste, having an unchallenged primacy in the ritual, literary, and economic life of the region. Believed to be the descendants of the Aryan settlers who colonized Kerala during the early centuries of the Christian era, the Nambudiris owed their influence as much to their retention of Aryan cultural traditions as to their economic independence vis-a-vis other social groups.¹⁶

The fact that the Brahmins were the dominant and privileged elite of South India did not earn them immunity from certain social constraints imposed by the caste system. One constraint which distinguished them from the rest of Hindu society was their abstention from any kind of manual work. Ritual taboos, while allowing Brahmins to own land and, indeed, conferring high prestige for it, proscribed them from cultivating the lands themselves. As a consequence, their lands were leased out to

non-Brahmin tenants or cultivated by hired laborers belonging to the Harijan castes. Prohibitions against involvement in trade and business were less severe, although Brahmins who turned to such vocations were heartily despised by their fellow brethren and relegated to an inferior social position. In view of these social constraints, Brahmins without landed property or assured priestly incomes increasingly turned to secular vocations, especially in the service of the state.

The stereotype of the Brahmin engrossed in the pursuit of knowledge and living in seclusion from the secular world and its temptations is so far removed from reality that it has often obscured the real bases of Brahmin power in South India. Among the earliest European writers to gain an accurate insight into the true sources of Brahmin influence was a French missionary, Abbe Dubois, whose study, *Hindu Manners, Customs and Ceremonies*, made its appearance in the early years of the nineteenth century. While highlighting the importance of religion and land as sources of Brahmin affluence, Dubois also explains how this caste group had successfully infiltrated the key positions in the princely states of South India. According to Dubois, the Brahmins' "main object, upon which they expend the greatest ingenuity, [was] to gain access to the courts of princes or other people of high rank." Once they had secured a foothold, Brahmins quickly gained the confidence of their masters and manevred themselves into "the best and most lucrative posts" from where they proceeded to enrich themselves "by carrying on unchecked a system of injustice, fraud, dishonesty, and oppression." Even Muslim and European rulers, argues Dubois, were almost totally dependent upon Brahmins to run their administration.¹⁷

While Dubois pinpoints some of the essential qualities which elevated the Brahmins so far above the rest of Hindu society, he has not sufficiently emphasized their role in providing coherence and stability to Hindu society. As guardians of the

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Hindu tradition, the Brahmin elite not only formulated a moral and social code to regulate the behavior of society as a whole but also ensured that that code was stringently observed. In the latter task, the Brahmins drew upon the support of the various caste assemblies, which debated questions relating to social propriety and punished those who departed from the accepted rules of conduct. It was a system in which no group, irrespective of its position in the caste hierarchy, ever challenged the major premises which ordered the overall social framework. This consensus can largely be attributed to the pervasive influence of the idea of karma which stressed that individual character was determined by actions of earlier lives of the soul, and that improvement in status could only be achieved through diligent performance of ritual obligations. Hence, Hinduism and the caste system provided a body of common beliefs and values which offset the lack of a single literary tradition or a unified political system in South India.

EARLY BRITISH RULE IN SOUTH INDIA

Although Western imperialism reached India's shores as early as 1498, it was not until three centuries later that British colonial rule was established over large parts of South India. The elimination of the French threat, the annihilation of the power of Mysore, and the appropriation of the territories of Hyderabad, Tanjore, and Arcot left the British politically dominant in the peninsula, exercising direct authority over much of Tamilnadu and Andhra, as well as the Malayalam-speaking district of Malabar and the Kannada-speaking district of South Kanara, all of which came to form the so-called Madras Presidency.

The imposition of British rule in South India had been preceded by an era of considerable political turmoil and violence which can only be explained in terms of the fragmented nature of

political power in the peninsula and the perennial ambitions of the competing regional states to dominate each other. As the eighteenth century drew to a close, sieges and battles raged in an ever-rising crescendo, bringing in their wake chaos and devastation unprecedented even in the war-torn history of South India. The regions worst affected were Tamilnadu and Andhra. In Tamilnadu, the rule of Mysore and Arcot was characterized by instability, imposition of illegal levies, forced labor, and the consequent impoverishment of the rural community. The situation in the coastal Andhra districts was little different. While the area became a focal point of power conflicts after 1748, its inhabitants were left to the mercy of grasping rent collectors, local chieftains, and *zamindars*. In the interior Andhra districts, conditions were decidedly worse. Here the impact of over a century of incessant wars led to widespread depredation, banditry, and depopulation of certain villages. Despairing of ever finding protection from a central power, the inhabitants of this area armed themselves and lived in fortified settlements where they could withstand assaults by neighboring chieftains and marauding gangs.¹⁸

The change from Indian to British rule symbolized, among other things, a change from anarchy to order. It was as if the long decades of chaos and depredation were arrested at one blow, and in their place emerged the security and stability of the British Raj. Though this is a gross oversimplification of what actually occurred, this generalization has a grain of truth insofar as British intervention in South India eventually ended the destructive interstate conflicts of the preceding centuries. However, the more important heritage of the new regime was the creation of a centralized state authority where the decision-making process was rationalized, administrative procedures systematized, the machinery of public accounting and revenue collecting perfected, and uniform and impersonal law replaced customary rules.

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One result of the change of regimes in South India was the virtual destruction of the traditional political elite. The absolute monarchy disappeared from view, except in the rump principalities of Mysore, Hyderabad, Travancore, and Cochin, where the elite continued to rule, albeit shorn of much of its sovereign power. Also affected were the motley array of lesser chieftains, hill rulers, and revenue collectors who had assumed the mantle of sovereignty when the authority of the regional powers began to wane. In Rayalu Simas, for instance, local chieftains called *poligars* had carved out autonomous fiefs which they ruled with the aid of armed retainers. When this area passed under British control in 1800, there were no less than eighty *poligar* chieftains and 30,000 retainers exercising sway over the region. Though many of these chieftains were finally destroyed, some of them were, nonetheless, turned into a peaceful, law-abiding class of landlords or *zamindars* through coercion and monetary inducements.¹⁹ Elsewhere in South India, a broadly identical policy was pursued. Local chieftains were invariably recognized as *zamindars* of their fiefs so long as they acknowledged allegiance to the British Raj and paid a fixed annual assessment on their estates.

The establishment of a class of *zamindars*, notwithstanding the early tensions that developed between central authority and localizing forces, answered a real British need in enlisting the support of powerful elite groups in South India. Though the numerical strength of this class of rentiers was very small--there were only 869 *zamindari* families in the Madras Presidency in 1891-2--their potential strength could be gauged from the fact that they controlled a quarter of the territorial area of this far-flung province.²⁰ Indeed, so large was the size of some of these *zamindaries*, notably, Vizianagram, Venkatagiri, Ramnad, Shivagunga, and Pittapuram, that they came to be regarded as minor, political kingdoms with considerable manpower and financial resources.

However, as the nineteenth century wore on, these *zamindars* regarded themselves less and less as independent rulers capable of challenging the British Raj and increasingly became one of its bulwarks, even believing that their position depended upon the continued existence of the Raj.

A distinguishing characteristic of this class of landed aristocrats was their innate conservatism. They were strongly attached to their traditional beliefs, participated in all religious rites and festivities, and patronized cultural activities. Western education was by and large ignored, except in a few conspicuous instances. William Logan's description of "the Malabar Rajahs and nobility" in 1875 applied with equal force to the landed aristocracy of South India as a whole: "Wrapped up in the narrow exclusiveness of their family mansions, their intelligence has had no field for its exercise except in the management of the internal affairs of the family, and has therefore gone to sleep, or, turned in on itself, has wasted its energies in interminable disputes which, in some instances, have wrecked the prosperity of the families."²¹ Without enlightenment and self-discipline, the landed aristocracy of South India failed to live up to its ascribed rule as "the natural leaders of the people," and instead squandered its energies and wealth on luxury, litigation, and hankering for official titles and honors.

The *zamindari* system represented only one form of land control in South India. Far more pervasive in influence was the *ryotwari* system which embraced almost three-fourths of the total area of the Madras Presidency. The advocates of this system of land tenure wished to create not only "a large body of independent Rayets," who would be shielded from the "corrupt & faithless Zemindar,"²² but also ensure that "every ryot will, on his own estate, be at once proprietor, farmer, and labourer" at the same time.²³ In reality, however, the *ryotwari* system achieved the contrary result of strengthening the position of the elite castes, mostly

Brahmins, who had long enjoyed superior tenure rights to the soil. With the exception of *mirasdars* in certain Tamil districts, whose claims to be sole proprietors of the land were not recognized, the other superior tenure holders, whether *kadims* of Andhra, *janmis* of Malabar, or *mulawargadars* of South Kanara, were all invariably elevated to the status of modern landlords. The consequence of this policy was to deprive lower tenurial groups, who were mostly non-Brahmins and Harijans, of their customary rights to the soil and expose them to the dangers of eviction by their new landlords.

There is little doubt that the early British officials had failed to grasp the communal quality of land control in traditional South India. They had failed to recognize that there were no true landlords in the modern sense of the term with exclusive rights to the land. Traditional rural society had a well-graded hierarchy of "superior" and "inferior" tenure holders. Each group in this hierarchy had its rights as well as responsibilities; each group discharged its specific role for which it was entitled to a stipulated share of the produce. In short, it was a corporate system with customary law and ritual prohibitions reinforcing the rights and status of each of these groups. The superior tenure holders, being mostly Brahmins, because of proscriptions against manual work, had to lease out the land or employ hired laborers. Equally, Harijans were denied the right to own land or lease it by strong ritual sanctions.²⁴

The British decision to confer absolute proprietary rights to superior tenure holders had important implications. Existing cleavages, especially between the elite Brahmin castes and the rest of Hindu society, were further widened. Whereas in the past Brahmin power had been tempered by social and customary restraints, the new order imposed no brakes on the exercise of their power. Backed by British courts and unfettered by any elaborate tenancy rights, Brahmin landlords

asserted their newfangled rights to their maximum advantage.

Nowhere in South India was this change from communal to individual ownership more pregnant with social and political implications than in the district of Malabar. Here, the British recognized the *janmis* as landlords in 1792. Being mainly Nambudiri Brahmins and some Nayar chieftains, these *janmis* did not cultivate their land but leased it to *kanamdars* and *pattamdars*. The *kanamdars*, usually Nayars or Mappillas, paid a lump sum or *kanam* to get their lease, which was renewed periodically. The Mysorean conquest of Malabar in 1776 disturbed the stability of this corporate agrarian system by imposing a heavy assessment which deprived the *janmis* of their share of the produce. Many *janmis* also took fright at Tipu's threat of forcible conversion and fled to Travancore, leaving the *kanamdars* in virtual control of their estates. When the British annexed Malabar, the *janmis* returned and staked their claim as landlords, which was recognized. For some years the *janmis* were too heavily indebted to the *kanamdars* to flex their muscles, but when their debts were paid off by the 1830s, they began to increase their demands and evict those *kanamdars* unable to meet them.* The seeds of an agrarian conflict were thus sown, and, invariably, the conflict assumed a religious character as some of the evicted *kanamdars* were Mappillas. The so-called Mappilla "outrages" began in November 1836 and their persistence for much of the British period turned Malabar into the most violence-ridden

* During the second half of the nineteenth century, land evictions in Malabar sharply increased. In the 1880s, 90 per cent of the cases before the civil judges in the district were eviction cases. Governor Connemara called Malabar "the Ireland of the (Madras) Presidency." *Tours of His Excellency the Right Honourable Lord Connemara*, No. 111 (November, 1887), p. 4.

district of South India.²⁵

That the British were predisposed towards the interests of the strongly entrenched social groups was more glaringly apparent in their decision to confirm those elite castes in the key positions in the village and district administration of South India. Early British officials, in their search for stability and security of the Raj, saw in the traditional village system an important instrument for building an enduring, colonial framework. Convinced that in the preceding centuries of political instability it was the resilience of the village institutions which had provided for order and continuity, British administrators, like Thomas Munro, resisted efforts to circumscribe the powers and functions of the village headman,²⁶ while others expressed concern that the *ryotwari* system with its stress on individual ownership would eventually undermine the corporate fabric of village society.²⁷ These arguments not only served to keep intact the established institutions of power in the villages during the first half of the nineteenth century but also permitted entrenched elite groups to perpetuate their power in rural society.

Power in the villages of South India was vested in the hands of *patels* (headmen) and *karnams* (accountants). In Tamilnadu, *patels* had a long history of dominating village affairs and limiting the interference of any external authority. As a rule, they were chosen from the most powerful families in the village who were in most cases large *mirasdars* drawn from the higher Hindu castes. Acting more often than not as a collective group, *patels* mediated in disputes between the village and outside power and maintained the peace within the village.²⁸ In Andhra, on the other hand, village heads called Pedda Naidus, Pedda Kapus, and Pedda Reddis, had to share power with the *karnams*. While the village heads belonged to the influential non-Brahmin castes and were dominant in the villages of the interior Telugu districts, the *karnams* were almost always Niyogi Brahmins and were influential in

the coastal areas.

A reflection of British anxiety to retain the traditional institutions of village authority was their enactment of Regulation XI of 1816. Concerned that the authority of the *patels* had been undermined on account of their frequent removal, this regulation attempted to shore up their position by investing them with the powers of the *mansif* and placing the village police under their control. Other village functionaries were also confirmed in their former positions, with their old powers restored to them as far as possible. Forms of remuneration were also to be governed by traditional practice: village officials were to be paid in the form of rent free land, grain contributions by villagers, or the levying of fees on specific items of sale.²⁹

The extent to which British respect for established village institutions had permitted entrenched, elite groups to maintain their power was revealed in a report which Walter Elliot, Commissioner of the Northern Circars, submitted to the Madras Government in 1854. Elliot's portrayal of village authority in this area showed that the real source of local influence, despite over half a century of British rule, was still the *karnam*, a position largely controlled by the Niyogi Brahmins. While the head *ryots*, be they Pedda Naidus or Pedda Kapus, by and large received only meagre allowances for discharging their duties, the *karnams* almost everywhere enjoyed substantial *inams*, that is, claimed fees in the form of a share of the produce, and were entitled to travelling allowances for official duties. Moreover, Elliot found that the practice of payment by fees was a fertile source of corruption. *Karnams* used their power to extort various kinds of contributions from the cultivators for the ostensible purpose of supporting charities and religious institutions. Not surprisingly, the Niyogi Brahmins who dominated this office in the Northern Circars were anxious to safeguard it as a family preserve.³⁰

The policy of conciliating powerful, elite groups in South India also dictated to a large extent the British decision to confirm the Mahratta Brahmins in the key positions of the district administration. The power that this elite group came to wield during the early decades of British rule was founded mainly on its almost exclusive control of the position of the *sheristadar*. This functionary, well versed in local history and conditions, exercised surveillance over the Indian establishment in the Collector's *katcheri* (office). As the European Collector was often overwhelmed with multifarious duties, it was the *sheristadar* who attended to the onerous details of revenue collection and accounts, settling the annual assessment and authorizing remissions. In the eyes of the rural community, the *sheristadar* was the "real administrator" who controlled the sole channel of access to the Collector.³¹ The other position of importance in the district administration where the influence of the Mahratta Brahmins was evident was that of the *tahsildar*. As the chief executive officer of the taluk containing a few hundred villages, the *tahsildar* discharged revenue, judicial, and police duties under the supervision of the European Collector.

Table 1
Communal and Caste Groups Occupying Elite Positions *

Caste/Community	Head Sheristadars	Deputy Sheristadars	Tahsildars	Total
Mahratta Brahmins	17	20	117	154
Other Brahmins	2	13	68	83
Non-Brahmins	2	3	45	50
Indian Christians	0	2	3	5
Muslims	0	0	13	13
Eurasians	0	0	0	0
Total	21	38	246	305

* Ricketts, *Report*, p. 335. The Table describes the district administration of the Madras Presidency in January 1855.

That the Mahratta Brahmins, whose numbers in South India barely exceeded a few thousands,* should be preponderant in the district administration deserves some explanation. Part of the explanation lies in the power they had acquired in Tamil and Telugu areas during the period of Deccani, Mahratta, Mughal, and Mysorean rule. Since the sixteenth century, when the Deccani incursions into these areas began to gain momentum, Mahratta Brahmins of the Desastha subcaste were recruited into the revenue administration and gradually displaced local, elite groups at the district level. By the time the British established their power in South India, these Desasthas virtually held the keys to fiscal and administrative power in Tamilnadu and Andhra. Early British officials, anxious to legitimize their position by wooing the support of powerful elite groups, decided to turn to the Desasthas and draw on their experience in creating the framework of district administration. Equally agile and adaptive, the Desasthas met their new masters halfway, assiduously studied English, and won the confidence of the British superiors by their loyalty to the Raj and their deep knowledge of local administration.

But this is only half the story. The other half of the explanation lies in the skill with which the Desasthas manipulated power to ensure their continued domination of the district administration. Being a small, tight-knit community, held together by strong caste and matrimonial ties, the Desasthas were masters in the game of political manipulation. They filled all important positions in the *huzur katcheri* on a preferential basis, kept the secrets of their profession within their family and caste, and were able to survive dynastic changes and political turmoil.

* In 1891, there were 33,275 Mahratta Brahmins in the Madras Presidency. See *Madras Census, XIII (1891)*, p. 261.

The closed system of recruitment continued during the early decades of British rule. The sons of Desastha officials entered the *husur katcheri* at a young age, slowly acquired the skills of their calling, and ascended the ladder of administration by forging matrimonial alliances with families in influential positions. In Guntur, for example, Frykenberg claims that if the aspirant to office was a non-Brahmin or Muslim, he would be indeed fortunate to get into the *husur katcheri* at all. If he was a Niyogi Brahmin, his chances were better because of the regional influence of this caste group. Invariably, it was the Desastha who had the edge over all other applicants, as his kinsmen were in control of the *husur katcheri* and usually had the ear of the British Collector who controlled, in theory at least, recruitment of all personnel below the rank of the *sheristadar*.³²

That these administrative elites of South India performed their official tasks in an atmosphere of widespread corruption during the early decades of British rule cannot be denied. To some extent, their formation and orientation rendered this inevitable. The recruitment of district and village officials exclusively from certain castes, the belief that revenue collection was an exercise in extracting as much as possible from the subject population to fill the coffers of the state, and the adherence to old administrative practices meant that some of the abuses of the traditional system would be carried over into the British period. To an equal extent, official corruption was also a product of British revenue policy. By their widespread adoption of the *ryotwari* system, the British in South India not only foisted on the people a burgeoning bureaucracy of largely underpaid officials but also created the basis for official interference at almost every stage of agricultural activity.³³ Moreover, the concentration of revenue, judicial, and police duties in the same set of functionaries meant that there were no built-in checks on the activities of officials, while the

complicated nature of the judicial process lent immunity to officials from any kind of court sanctions.

Although the instincts of the early British administrators were basically conservative, insofar as they were concerned with the consolidation of their authority through an alliance with established elite groups in South India, it is nonetheless important to see British rule as more than simply a system of political domination seeking its indefinite prolongation. Indeed, for purposes of analyzing social and political change, it will be more meaningful to view British colonialism as a dynamic force possessing certain inherently revolutionary tendencies which were capable of altering a society long characterized by the stability of economic and social institutions and the tenacity of its religious beliefs. One revolutionary tendency associated with British rule in India was Western education whose importance in effecting social and political change has long been recognized by historians and others. Equally revolutionary was the growth of the market economy in India which the British consciously promoted ever since they established their ascendancy in the subcontinent.

It is a moot point whether the introduction of the market economy reflected the narrow economic interests of the colonizing power. Whatever the real motivation, British attachment to the ideals of a market society, where the production and distribution of goods and services would be regulated by the market mechanism, lay at the heart of their decision to recognize private property, including individual ownership of land. Under the *ryotwari* system, land was made freely alienable, and its value was to be determined by the free play of market forces. Landholders no longer viewed their estates as ancestral fiefs whose produce they ought to share with other tenurial groups. Instead, they saw their estates as potential sources of income which ought to be augmented, even if it meant displacement of groups which had long customary

rights to the soil. Those with wealth invested in land and put it to the best economic use.

A consequence of this change was the emancipation of labor from hereditary and communal obligations. Labor, like land, became a factor of production and was available to the highest bidder. In the nineteenth century, the movement of labor into new sectors of the economy was encouraged by the growth of the plantation industry, the development of public works, and the demand by Europeans for domestic help, all of which were met by lower caste groups either displaced from the land or attracted by more lucrative openings for their services. Mobility of labor on any appreciable scale could not have been achieved without resort to the system of wage payments. Indeed, one was the necessary corollary of the other, and especially in urban areas labor was increasingly bought and sold by money payments. The impact of this change on the monetization of the economy cannot be underestimated. Moreover, British insistence upon collecting revenue in cash encouraged trends towards monetization.³⁴

A feature of the emerging market economy of India was the expansion of foreign and domestic trade. Prior to the advent of the West, Indian economy was characterized by self-sufficiency, although a limited but lucrative trade had always been conducted in some luxury items. In the nineteenth century, improvements in the technology of production and distribution of goods had resulted in a tremendous expansion in the volume of trade, especially in agricultural products like sugar, tobacco, tea, coffee, and cotton. International and domestic trade began to impinge on several aspects of the economic and social life of South India, particularly in those urban centers which had developed in response to expanding foreign trade.

Of these urban centers in South India, Madras was by far the most important, although it must be stressed that its preeminence stemmed in part from

the fact that it was also the administrative capital of a far-flung British province. It was in this southern metropolis that the modernizing colonial system created the conditions for the rise of a new indigenous elite. This elite came to play a seminal role in the civic life of Madras in the mid-nineteenth century, especially in harnessing western techniques of organization and propaganda to express its discontent against specific British policies and actions.

1. Ferment in the Metropolis

FORMATION OF AN ELITE

In 1800 Madras ranked among the major cities of the world. With its estimated population of 250,000, it vied with Bombay and Calcutta to be the first city of the Indian subcontinent. In peninsular India, Madras dwarfed all other towns, eclipsing such ancient, dynastic capitals as Madura and Conjeeveram and supplanting more recent, commercial centers such as Calicut and Masulipatam. Within the space of less than two centuries of British settlement, what had been no more than an obscure fishing village situated at the mouth of a shallow river had been transformed into a modern metropolis.

The rise of Madras, notwithstanding the deficiencies of its harbor and its oppressive climate, has to be related to the role that it played in the commercial and political life of the British imperial system. By the beginning of the nineteenth century, the varied interests of trade, industry, and government were drawn to this city. It was through this entrepot that an ever-growing volume of goods entered and left the Madras Presidency. Madras also increasingly became the center of various handicrafts and trades which drew men and capital from the surrounding regions and beyond. Economic activity of a vastly, expanded scale generated, in turn, such supporting institutions as

agency houses, banks, and insurance companies. Besides its commercial role, Madras was also the administrative headquarters of the southern Presidency, a province considerably extended as a result of successive British annexations of neighboring territories during the closing years of the eighteenth century. With such enlarged responsibilities of government came the inevitable burgeoning of the administrative and military establishments, most of which were located in Madras. The Council house, the Corporation of Madras, the offices of the Board of Revenue, Accountant-General and Auditor-General, and the military barracks were located within Fort St. George. Residential quarters, including Government House, hospitals, churches, and schools were shifted to suburbs like Triplicane, Egmore, Chintadripet, and Mylapore.¹

Like many colonial cities which the British helped to build in Asia, the population of Madras was extremely heterogeneous in character. In part, this can be attributed to the conscious British policy of encouraging the settlement of Portuguese, Armenians, and Jewish traders. If the aim was to infuse vitality into the commercial life of the city, its long-term effect was to impart a cosmopolitan character to the southern metropolis. The Portuguese for some years had resisted migrating to Madras, but the fall of San Thomé to the Muslim power of Golconda in 1662 precipitated an exodus, with many Portuguese traders taking residence in Black Town.² They were soon followed by Armenians, regarded in the seventeenth century as "the great merchants and brokers in the eastern world," who settled in Madras in steady numbers after 1680, having secured trading privileges from the British Company. Investments in local trade, profits from transactions in precious stones with Persia and Europe, and a near monopoly of the Manila trade accounted for the affluence of the Armenian community.³ Some of its wealthier members, wishing to keep alive their cultural heritage, sponsored the publication of works on classical Armenian

literature. In 1794, an Armenian priest started in Madras the earliest known Armenian newspaper, called the *Azdarar* (*Intelligentser*).⁴

One group which received scant welcome in Madras for many years were the English free merchants. The English East India Company, fearful of encroachment upon its monopoly trading rights, had severely restricted the issue of licenses to British free merchants seeking trade in Asia. In 1710 there were only twenty-nine free merchants residing in Madras. At the end of the century, the number had probably trebled. For much of this period, the free merchants struggled to stay afloat, battling against the Company's monopoly system. However, their fortunes changed during the early years of the nineteenth century owing to the Company's shedding its commercial role, and the expanded opportunities provided by the rise of the British Raj. The free merchants spread themselves out in various directions, appropriating an increasing share of the business of the Madras Presidency. With this expansion came changes in business methods. Free merchants, trading as individuals, now began to constitute themselves into corporate bodies. In 1812 there were twelve agency houses in Madras, all European, and among them were such well-known names as Arbuthnot, De Moute & Co., Binny, Dennison & Co., and Parry & Pugh.⁵ The free merchants had come a long way. In 1836 they formed the Madras Chamber of Commerce to institutionalize their economic power.

European participation in the expanding commercial activity in South India could not have been sustained without the cooperation of an indigenous mercantile group. Hindu merchant castes, functionally differentiated from the rest of society, had been traditionally bankers, moneylenders, and wholesale and retail traders. Traditional banking systems had been well developed in South India, especially in urban society, where they financed lucrative branches of business as well as advanced loans to needy governments. However, under Indian

regimes the merchant class found it difficult to accumulate wealth, troubled as it was by lack of security of property, arbitrary exactions of the ruling groups, and state intervention in the profitable sectors of industry and trade.⁶ The advent of British rule removed many of these impediments, while the creation of a market economy provided the essential preconditions for the formation of an indigenous merchant class. In South India, such a class first emerged in Madras.

Since its foundation, Madras had exercised a strong attraction among the mercantile castes of neighboring Tamilnadu and Andhra. These castes were mainly Chettis and Vellalars of the Tamil districts and Komatis and Naidus of the Andhra region. They were enterprising and were prepared to migrate to areas with commercial potential. Especially mobile were the Chettis and Komatis, who were attracted to Madras in large numbers by security of life and property as well as extensive investment opportunities. Some invested in betel, indigo, and arrack farms; some financed weaving and artisan trades; some sponsored overseas trading ventures; some speculated in real property, including land; and some were retailers of imported articles. However, during the early decades of British settlement in Madras, many of these merchants acted as intermediaries between the British and Indian communities. As go-betweens, they were called *dubashes*.

The need for *dubashes* stemmed from European ignorance of the laws and habits of the country. The English East India Company had engaged the services of a *dubash* soon after its settlement in Madras. His main duty was to facilitate the purchase of cotton fabrics for export by the Company and dispose of imported goods from England. However, as occasion demanded, the *dubash* performed other tasks as well, which included supplying provisions to the British community, mediating in caste disputes, and acting as ambassadors to the courts of Indian rulers.⁷ Indeed, the Company's

dubash became an all-purpose agent discharging multifarious duties. The services of the *dubash* were also at the disposal of the Company officials who used him to transact their private business on a regular or temporary basis. Similarly, when the English free merchants arrived on the scene, they found the *dubash* an essential appendage in their business operations.

The extent to which these *dubashes* utilized their opportunities to amass fortunes is illustrated by the example of Pachaiyappa Mudaliar. Born in 1754 to a poor Vellalar family living not far from Madras, Pachaiyappa was fortunate in finding a patron in a wealthy *dubash* who encouraged him to study English and then cast him into the role of an apprentice *dubash*. He started his business career as a purchasing and selling agent for wholesale merchants in Madras. Some years later his services were engaged by an English free merchant to assist in the buying of goods for export to Europe. In this way, Pachaiyappa diligently acquired a small fortune. After 1776 he branched out into more ambitious ventures: collecting taxes of villages, disbursing salaries of the personnel of the Nawab of Arcot, and supplying the Company's needs for grain and cloth. The success that attended these ventures made Pachaiyappa the foremost *dubash* in South India and drew him inevitably into the vortex of local power politics. At different times he became the financial agent or advisor of the Nawab of Arcot, the Raja of Tanjore, and the poligar chieftains of the southern Tamil districts. When he died in 1794, he left behind a large fortune which became the subject of a celebrated court case.⁸

As the eighteenth century drew to a close, and as the British began to impose their will over much of South India, the halcyon days of the *dubash* came to an end. Men of the stamp of Pachaiyappa faded away from the scene. Wealth of such proportions could only be amassed at transient, if confused, times when the country was in the grip of political

turbulence. Once order returned, opportunities for acquiring quick fortunes almost vanished. The next generation of *dubashes* had to earn their wealth in more pedestrian ways. Servicing the needs of the Company was still a lucrative business, but here *dubashes* found themselves in an unequal competition with European agency houses which were more efficient and possessed larger capital resources. The ending of the privilege of private trade that had been granted British civil and military officials further restricted the opportunities of the *dubash*. In 1834, according to one account, *dubashes* in Madras were described as "needy adventurers" looking after the modest needs of ship captains and European visitors to the city.⁹

If the role of the *dubash* declined in importance during the early years of the nineteenth century, Indian merchants with initiative and enterprise found promising outlets elsewhere to make their mark in the competitive world of Madras. The rise of the British Raj saw vast tracts of the countryside come under the single political authority through which goods and capital could flow without serious impediment or harassment. For example, it was now possible for merchants to purchase essential commodities at their source of production and transport them safely over long distances to areas where they would fetch high prices. Trade in grain had always been important in South India, controlled by a numerous class of small merchants. Munro claimed in 1805 that the grain trade employed more men and bullocks than all the other branches of trade taken together.¹⁰ Times of scarcity and glut brought windfalls to these merchants, as they were adept in manipulating prices to their advantage. In a country noted for its capricious climate, such opportunities were not infrequent.

Capital acquired in this way was invested in different ventures in order to spread out the risks. Some investments were channelled into cultivation of such cash crops as indigo, sugar,

coffee, and cotton, usually as joint ventures with European capitalists. Also lucrative was speculation in landed property. In Madras demand for land in the central urban area stimulated speculation in which merchants with capital participated. Land was useful as security for business loans, while some merchants leased it out at exorbitant rates. However, it ought not to be assumed that the other lines of business were unprofitable: loans at usurious rates to the ruling aristocracy, investment in local handicrafts, textiles, and arrack farms, and retail trade in various kinds of imported articles continued to sustain many merchants in Madras.

Among the Hindu merchants who reaped the benefits of widening economic horizons, there were some who were prepared to experiment with the superior Western methods of business organization. The prominent place occupied by European agency firms had induced some wealthy Hindu merchants to invest their excess capital in these firms. Some Hindu merchants even purchased the position of *dubash* of an agency house by depositing a large sum of money and drawing commission on orders. Those with greater enterprise and capital resources decided to venture out by forming agency firms of their own. In 1851, for example, the *Madras Almanac* listed three Hindu agency houses operating in the city.¹¹ These were essentially family partnerships, started by wealthy Chettis, Komatis, and Naidus, to compete with their European rivals for a share in the import-export business, speculate in indigo, cotton, and textile fabrics, and participate in the retail trade. This class of Hindu merchants shared little in common with the old *dubashes*, being neither dependent on government patronage nor tied to an European clientele for its existence.

Although the impact of the new economic forces was to modernize the forms and institutions through which certain indigenous trading groups carried on their business activities, it is nonetheless true that the Hindu commercial elite, which became

important in Madras during the mid-nineteenth century, remained strongly rooted to its old social and cultural values. Neither the exposure to the modernizing influences of an urbanized society nor the elite's smattering knowledge of the English language had in any significant way undermined its adherence to its inherited caste and ritual obligations. The laws of commensality and marriage were faithfully observed, the various family festivals meticulously celebrated, and pilgrimages to temples and shrines regularly undertaken. But some compromises with tradition had to be made in an urban society: the laws of pollution, for one, could not be strictly observed in Madras. It was not possible to divide the city into Brahmin, non-Brahmin, and Harijan sectors.

In adhering to its traditional social and cultural values, the Hindu commercial elite was merely conforming to what everyone else in urban society was doing. But where it differed was in its vigorous promotion of temple building and its patronage of the traditional arts and Sanskrit education. Almost every Hindu merchant had some connection with a temple in Madras or in its environs. Many in fact spent considerable sums in building or maintaining temples. Temple building among the wealthy merchants became such a mania that the British officials commented wryly in 1756 that "in this Country, Men who are fond of shewing their Wealthy and Grandeur have as yet found no better means of displaying them than by the building of Temples."¹² To the Hindu, however, temple building was less a display of wealth than an act of piety. Similar motives also prompted this Hindu commercial elite to erect *choultries* (rest houses), subsidize Sanskrit education, and patronize the traditional arts. Pachaiyappa typified in many ways the Hindu merchant of the time. He regularly entertained countless pilgrims and learned men in his house, fed thousands of mendicants daily, erected *choultries* along the routes to famous shrines, gave jewels and money to temples, and bequeathed a large

legacy in his will for religious charities.¹³

Despite its innate conservatism, the Hindu commercial elite evinced no hostility towards the British rulers. Partly, this attitude was determined by considerations of self-interest. As its rise was the result of conditions created by British rule, it saw its continued prosperity in the maintenance of that rule. Equally important was the fact that the early policies of the British in South India did not directly impinge on the fabric of religious and social life of the Hindus. By proclaiming at the outset the policy of religious neutrality, the Company's officials gave cover to all established faiths in India, even to the extent of tolerating some archaic social usages. Obstacles that lay in the way of the free exercise of religious and cultural activities were largely removed. To an extent, the British even usurped the role of earlier Indian regimes by assuming supervision of Indian religious institutions and by keeping a tight rein on the entry and free movement of Christian missionaries.

However, this policy was not destined to last. Agitation from the missionary societies in India, reinforced by pressures from their supporters in England, led to perceptible changes in British religious policy in South India during the 1830s, resulting in the removal of restrictions on the entry of Christian missionaries into the country and the withdrawal of the government from the management of Indian religious institutions. These changes, together with the growing involvement of European officials in the activities of Christian missions in South India, drove a wedge between the Hindu commercial elite and the British rulers.

CONFLICT WITH MISSIONARIES

Christian missionary activity in South India has a long and checkered history. Francis Xavier, a Roman Catholic, had made conversions among Hindus

in Tinnevelly district during the sixteenth century. In the following century, a Jesuit mission registered some success among higher caste Hindus at Madura. However, such efforts lacked permanence, and the overall Christian impression on Indian society was slight, except for the contributions of such eminent missionaries as C. J. Beschi, B. Ziegenbalg and C. F. Schwartz in the field of Indian languages and literature. To the Indians, these missionaries, as Ingham points out, "were important as individuals [rather] than as representatives of any unified body."¹⁴ A weak, organizational base, coupled with the capricious behavior of Indian ruling groups, robbed missionary activity of the chance to make any sustained impression.

A new era in Christian endeavor began in the wake of the Evangelical Revival which was sweeping the West during the closing years of the eighteenth century. Under the impulse of this religious awakening, new societies sprang up in Britain and America, some of which were anxious to carry their message to the distant parts of Africa and Asia. In South India this new drive was spearheaded by five societies, namely, the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, London Missionary Society, Church Missionary Society, Wesleyan Mission, and the Free Church Mission of Scotland.¹⁵ Possessing a sound organization and considerable financial resources, the missionaries soon established a wide network of stations, seminaries, schools, and printing houses in the various districts of South India. Simultaneously, they launched a successful agitation against the restrictions which the East India Company had imposed on their work in India.

The missionaries, who arrived in increasing numbers during the early decades of the nineteenth century, were very different in temperament from their predecessors. Stirred by the fervor of the evangelical movement, and arriving in India at a time when the British were consolidating their political power, these missionaries adopted an aggressive approach in their task of conversion.

Dogmatic to the point of intolerance, they believed that Christianity was the superior faith entrusted with the task of civilizing the world. They showed, in contrast to their predecessors, less deference to Indian traditions or susceptibilities. They dismissed as worthless much of India's heritage or achievements. Hinduism was singled out for severe condemnation. Described as "a system which abounds in the grossest absurdities and most evident contradictions," Hinduism was accused of sanctioning "appalling cruelties and vices."¹⁶ Its devotees were depicted as "a depraved people," their conscience "seared, the will enslaved and palsied, and the whole weight and influence of society ranged on the side of evil."¹⁷ But the Hindus were not abandoned as a lost cause. Christianity, the missionaries believed, would be the key to the regeneration of the Hindus, and in achieving this grand design every weapon in the armory of Christian missions was to be used, including help from the ruling Christian power in India.

The initial missionary thrust was directed against British religious policy in South India. Their main grievance here was the apparent support which the Madras authorities were giving to Indian religions under the so-called policy of religious neutrality. The missionaries argued that the religious policy of the Madras Government was not neutral, either in theory or in practice. Under Regulation VII of 1817, the Board of Revenue was to supervise the management of Indian religious institutions and their large endowments. In practice official intervention extended to minute details, from the supervision of festivals to scrutinizing the finances of temples.¹⁸ Also, it was "almost universal practice" in South India for the officials to compel the Harijans and Christian converts from the lower castes to assist in Hindu festivals, while European soldiers were posted in attendance "to give additional effect to the show."¹⁹

Missionary opposition to this policy began to be clearly articulated during the 1830s. It was

argued that official involvement in religious affairs had "a very pernicious effect" on the Hindu mind and that it "seriously obstructed the labour of the Christian Missionary."²⁰ In August 1836 the European residents in Madras, including some prominent civil and military officials, presented a memorial to the governor urging an end to official involvement in Indian religious affairs and the discontinuance of forced attendance of Christians at Indian festivals.²¹ Official vacillations led to the protest resignation of Sir Peregrine Maitland, the Commander-in-Chief of Madras.²² Faced with this growing volume of protest, the Court of Directors instructed in August 1838 the immediate ending of official connection with Indian religious institutions. The missionaries in Madras were jubilant. One of their organs remarked: "The unholy alliance of a Heathen Church with a Christian State has at length been repudiated."²³

The other missionary assault on Hinduism was to be directed through the agency of Western education. This strategy was based on the assumption that Western education would attract students from the higher caste Hindus, and that young minds were most susceptible to the teachings of the Gospel. The fact that the state had done little to promote Western education in South India, coupled with the failure of the Hindus to fill the void, left the field open for the missionaries. The first to embark successfully in this venture was the Free Church Mission of Scotland. Rejecting the old methods of proselytization, such as the offering of "earthy inducements," the Free Church Mission came to rely on Western education as the means to attract converts. In April 1837 is started the General Assembly's Institution in Black Town, then regarded by the missionaries as "the Sebastopol of Southern India, the citadel of Satan, the centre of caste, pride and Brahmanism."²⁴ No attempt was made to veil their real intentions, but this did not deter many Hindu families from sending their

children to the school. For a while nothing serious happened, but in 1841 three high caste Hindu students embraced Christianity despite parental protests. The conversions created "a panic in the Native community" in Madras and led to the precipitate withdrawal of many students from the school.²⁵

The event caused the first major breach between the missionaries and the articulate section of the Hindu community in Madras. No doubt, there had always been in the Hindu mind a feeling of suspicion of the missionaries, but there had been no open display of hostility, at least among the Hindus in Madras. However, the student conversions of 1841, coming so soon after the official withdrawal from the management of religious institutions, embittered relations between the Hindus and missionaries and led to feverish demands by the former for some positive steps to stem the tide of missionary advance.

One step that was immediately taken was the starting of schools to offset the danger of exposing Hindu youths to missionary influences. Thus far, the main stumbling block was the lack of adequate funds, but in 1841 the Supreme Court in Madras ruled that part of Pachaiyappa's large bequest could be utilized for educational purposes. The trustees of Pachaiyappa's Charities, who were Hindus nominated by the government, decided to start a school to impart instruction in English and the regional languages. A building was rented in Black Town, and the school, named after Pachaiyappa, was formally opened in January 1842.²⁶

One of the trustees instrumental in this move was C. Srinivasa Pillay, a man who had inherited considerable wealth and was prepared to spend it in the cause of Indian advancement. Though he himself had not "tasted the delights and benefits of [Western] education,"²⁷ Srinivasa Pillay was discerning enough to realize that Western education would be one of the keys to India's regeneration. He found in George Norton, Advocate-General of Madras, an active and sympathetic friend. Norton,

since his arrival in Madras in 1828, had consciously tried to cultivate the friendship of progressive-minded Hindus in the metropolis. He started "a sort of conversation once a week at his own house for the better class of natives to meet and discuss subjects of general interest and information." Education featured prominently in these discussions, and Norton succeeded gradually "in raising the zeal and co-operation of the Native public mind for the advancement of Education."²⁸ Also, Norton persuaded his Hindu friends, including Srinivasa Pillay, to organize the Hindu Literary Society, which came to function as a forum for enlightened Hindu opinion in Madras. In September 1833 this body invited Norton to deliver a series of lectures on "the plan of Government and the system of administration of Justice in India." In these lectures, Norton stressed the importance of Western knowledge, not only to qualify Indians for higher administrative posts, but also to secure them their "Political privileges."²⁹

The Hindu Literary Society was stirred into action and in 1834 it started an English school which was attended by students from "respectable families."³⁰ But such efforts were too modest to meet the demand for Western education in Madras, and increasingly hopes were pinned on the government. In 1839, when the Madras authorities were maturing plans for establishing a high school, an address carrying 70,000 signatures from the inhabitants of Madras was presented to the governor strongly endorsing the plan. As Norton says, it would be "too much to suppose that the original composition [of the address] proceeded from any Hindoo," but there was no mistaking the genuineness of the Hindu demand for Western instruction, or the depth of their opposition to any system of education which interfered with "the religious faith or sentiments of the people."³¹ The latter warning was heeded when the High School of the Madras University was launched in April 1841. Norton became the first chairman of the Board of

Governors, and Srinivasa Pillay was nominated a member of the board.

Starting schools was one of the ideas which Hindu leaders in Madras conceived in their efforts to stem the tide of missionary advance. Another idea that was tried out was the starting of newspapers to counter the propaganda of the missionary organs, especially the *Native Herald*, which the Free Church Mission of Scotland had launched in October 1841 in the wake of the tumult caused by the student conversions earlier in the year. Since 1840 the Hindu cause was espoused by the *Native Interpreter*, founded by C. Narayanaswamy Naidu, a partner in the agency firm of G. Sidhulu & Co. In October 1844 this paper was purchased by Gajalu Lakshmanarasu Chetty and issued under a new name, the *Crescent*.³² Placed under the editorship of Edward Harley, an ex-naval officer and for many years a teacher at a school in Vepery, Madras,³³ the *Crescent* emerged as the outspoken advocate of Hindu interests in South India, giving free expression to the fear which many Hindus entertained about missionary activities and the possible effect that they might have on official religious policy.

Although the literary style of the *Crescent* was Harley's, there is no doubt that the content and tone of the paper reflected the political beliefs of Lakshmanarasu Chetty. Born near Madras in 1806 into a Komati merchant family, Lakshmanarasu Chetty studied in a local school where he acquired a fair proficiency in English. Even as a student, he was an active participant in debates and lectures which stimulated his interest in issues of the day and made him conscious of his rights and responsibilities. On leaving school, he joined his father's firm, G. Sidhulu & Co., one of the few agency houses in Madras. Here, he helped in building up the firm into one of the wealthiest in Madras, mainly through skillful speculation in textile and indigo trade. At the death of his father, Lakshmanarasu Chetty became the chief partner of the firm, enjoying a position of considerable

affluence and social prestige among the Hindu community in Madras.³⁴

Despite his involvement in the family business, Lakshmanarasu Chetty did not neglect his public duties. He continued to read widely in English works, making up for the deficiencies in his formal education. He corresponded with leaders in Bengal during the early 1840s on questions of public importance.³⁵ However, it was the escalating nature of missionary agitation in India and England that brought him into active political life. Like many members of the Hindu commercial elite in Madras, Lakshmanarasu Chetty became increasingly alarmed by the implications of such agitation on prevailing religious policy. He had witnessed the Madras Government's decision to withdraw from the management of Hindu temples and endowments, a step which he and many of his Hindu friends regarded as a concession to missionary agitation.

Also, he discerned a change in the attitude of local European officials towards religious questions. Some officials had been drawn into the activities of missionary bodies, sitting on local committees, making financial contributions, and even criticizing some aspects of official religious policy. Such behavior cast doubts in the minds of many Hindus, including Lakshmanarasu Chetty, as to the ability of such officials to be impartial arbiters in religious disputes involving Hindus and Christians. It was even feared that the policy of religious neutrality might be eroded from within by pro-missionary officials. This fear had become fairly widespread in Madras since the arrival of Tweeddale as governor in 1842. It was alleged that a "missionary party," consisting of a loose coalition of officials and missionaries, had begun to wield influence over the actions of the local government. Among the prominent officials closely identified with the Christian societies were Tweeddale, J. F. Thomas, Chief Secretary to the Madras Government, and Captain C. A. Browne, Military Secretary to the Madras Government.³⁶

To Lakshmanarasu Chetty, the real danger lay not so much in the activities of the missionaries as in the involvement of important European officials in Christian proselytization. He did not object to the legitimate missionary endeavor--which in any case had gone on for many decades without creating alarm--but he was firmly opposed to official patronage in any form being extended to such activity. Consequently, his anger was directed against the local government, and especially against those European officials who made themselves conspicuous by their pro-missionary proclivities. In starting the *Crescent*, Lakshmanarasu Chetty had recognized the need for an organ that would truthfully depict the dangers facing the Hindus in South India, while at the same time countering the strategy of Christian missionaries and their official allies wherever such strategy was to harness the government in the cause of Christian proselytization.

Lakshmanarasu Chetty did not have long to wait. In January 1845 the Indian Government published the *Lex Loci* Draft Act. It was not maneuverings of the missionaries, as suspected by the Hindus, but rather the need for a code of law applicable to Europeans, Eurasians, and Armenians that lay behind the original conception of the *Lex Loci* report, drafted by the Indian Law Commission in 1840. But missionary pressure did influence the eventual drafting of this legislation when three clauses, strictly unrelated to the measure,³⁷ were inserted to neutralize those sections of Hindu and Muslim law which inflicted forfeiture of rights to ancestral property upon anyone renouncing these religions. To Lakshmanarasu Chetty and his Hindu friends, this legislation was confirmation of their fears that the government was throwing its support behind the missionaries in subverting Hinduism.

A public meeting was convened in Madras in April 1845 to declare Hindu opposition to the proposed legislation. Attended by over 200 Hindus and presided over by Lakshmanarasu Chetty, the meeting

approved a memorial to the Indian Government which charged the latter with "a breach of faith" in drafting this measure. Particular objection was taken to the three clauses which the memorialists alleged were "a palpable invasion of their ancient rights, a direct attack upon their religion, and a peremptory subversion of their ancestral and inalienable Law." They urged that these "obnoxious clauses" be "altogether expunged from the Act," or further action be deferred pending an appeal to be made to the Court of Directors.³⁸ This protest, reinforced by another from Hindus in Bengal, won a temporary respite when the proposed legislation was set aside.

Here was a Hindu meeting of a new kind. In contrast to caste gatherings, which had traditionally regulated the internal workings of the Hindus, this was an overtly political demonstration attended by Hindus of different caste and sectarian affiliations in which the wider implications of an act of public policy were debated. Moreover, this was the first known Hindu gathering in Madras which had all the trappings of a modern political protest meeting: the permission of the sheriff of Madras was secured; a chairman was elected to conduct the meeting; a number of resolutions were passed; and a memorial was approved and signed for submission to the government.

The credit for all this belonged to Lakshmanarasu Chetty, a new kind of Hindu leader who was perhaps the first to adopt the Western forms of political protest in South India. No doubt his European friends, especially Harley, helped him with advice and guidance, but the initiative and energy were essentially his. In the years that followed, Lakshmanarasu Chetty showed his readiness to apply this new style of political agitation whenever the interests of the Hindu community warranted it.

Hindus living in the rural areas of South India, however, showed little of the organizational sophistication of their counterparts in Madras in

mounting opposition to missionary activities. In certain districts, relations between the Hindus and the missionaries had become so strained as to result in sporadic incidents of violence. Tinnevelly was the district most affected by such religious conflicts. Since the beginning of the nineteenth century, Tinnevelly and south Travancore had become the center of intensive missionary activities, encouraged by the mass conversion of the Shanars, the hereditary, toddy-drawing caste which inhabited the sandy coastal terrain. Some Harijans also went over to Christianity, and by 1850 the size of the Indian Christian community in Tinnevelly district had swollen to 40,000.³⁹

The emergence of a sizable breakaway minority, drawn exclusively from a few castes, was bound to create some degree of social and economic dislocation. Socially, the converts rebelled against the ritual restrictions which the caste system had imposed on them. Economically, conversion loosened the bonds which tied these agricultural castes to the landowning higher castes. The latter, confronted by a less docile tenantry, attributed their troubles to the missionaries. Believing that their problems would be solved if the converts returned to their Hindu fold, the landlords resorted first to persuasion and, if it failed, to persecution. If the convert was a palmyra climber, he was deprived of his trees; if he was a tenant, eviction followed; if he had property, he was dispossessed.⁴⁰ Sometimes persecution assumed the character of intimidation and violence, which in turn provoked retaliation, from the Indian Christians.

In November 1845, disturbances flared up in Tinnevelly when Hindu mobs attacked some Christian villages, molesting inhabitants, plundering houses, and destroying property. The missionaries claimed that Hindu religious societies in the district instigated the disturbances in order to stem the mass drift of certain caste groups to Christianity. Also implicated was the Sadur Veda Siddhanta Sabha of Madras.⁴¹ Little is known of those who

organized this body, although it was claimed to enjoy support of some wealthy Hindus in Madras. Its aim was to mount opposition to the missionaries by adopting the latter's tactics: it published tracts in defence of Hinduism and recruited agents to deliver lectures in the districts.⁴² What direct role it played in the Tinnevelly disturbances is not clear. The local police charged about 100 Hindus in connection with the incidents, and many were convicted by the district court.⁴³ However, on appeal to the Court of Sadr and Foujdari Adalat, many of the sentences were squashed. At this stage, the Madras Government called upon the Sadr judges to submit copies of evidence taken in these cases and the sentences passed. This led to a conflict between the judges and the executive and culminated in the suspension, and later the dismissal, of one of the judges, Malcolm Lewin.

The dispute between the Tweeddale Administration and the Sadr judges was closely followed by the Hindu leaders in Madras. The decision to suspend Lewin prompted Lakshmanarasu Chetty and his friends to convene a public meeting in October 1846 to adopt a memorial to the Court of Directors as well as an address to Lewin for his efforts "to maintain the independence" of the judiciary. Amidst popular excitement, with the local authorities alerting the police and the military for fear of possible disturbance, the meeting passed a number of resolutions protesting against the activities of the "missionary party."

The main grievances of the Hindus were set forth in detail in a memorial to the Court of Directors. It was claimed that the "Civil and Religious rights and privileges" of the Hindus were being violated by the missionaries, abetted and encouraged by the European officials. The Tinnevelly disturbance received due mention. This district, the memorialists asserted, had become "the emporium of Missionaryism" under the active patronage of the Collector, E. B. Thomas, brother of the Chief Secretary. The intervention of the Madras Government in

the Sadr judgment was attributed to "a clandestine petition" which a missionary deputation presented to Tweeddale in March 1846.⁴⁴ Tweeddale denied these allegations and attributed the Hindu agitation to "a small and vicious party" in the metropolis which was embittered by the student conversions.⁴⁵

Preoccupation with religious controversies had come to dominate the actions of the articulate sections of the Hindu community in Madras. Missionary activity had become a highly emotive issue, raising strong passions on all sides and obscuring other questions. The breach between the Hindus and the European missionaries, caused by the student conversions of 1841, remained unhealed. The *Native Herald* commented in 1843: "The excitement (of 1841) has passed away; but ever since that day the heathen in the city have used their appropriate weapons of ridicule, contempt, and blasphemy against God and his Christ."⁴⁶ John Anderson, who was mainly instrumental in the student conversions, said in 1844 that the Hindu "enmity against the light is hardening their hearts, and making them more unapproachable. They seem to be smitten with judicial blindness."⁴⁷ The *Crescent* made no attempt to disguise what the Hindus in Madras thought about the missionaries and their official allies. "The Hindus," it observed in 1846, "stand aloof from the Europeans, the influential part of whom i.e. the evangelicals, they look upon as their declared and implacable enemies."⁴⁸

Far more significant was the steady deterioration in the relationship between the Hindus and the British rulers. Though this was in part due to the active involvement of individual European officials in the cause of Christian advancement, there was no doubt that the strains in the relationship were largely caused by the Hindu suspicion that the British authorities in India were antagonistic to their cherished religious and social traditions. The *Lex Loci Draft Act* was a case in point. In April 1850 the Indian Government detached the three

controversial clauses relating to inheritance and enacted them separately, under the title of the Caste Disabilities Removal Act. The decision to legislate, after seemingly abandoning it five years previously, brought a fresh volley of Hindu protests. The Crescent gave expression to the Hindu anger when it charged the Indian authorities of having acted with "shameful duplicity, profound stupidity, and insulting tyranny."⁴⁹

MADRAS NATIVE ASSOCIATION

In mounting their agitation against the missionaries, the Hindus in Madras were not aided by a political association. It should not be assumed, however, that the instincts of corporate action were absent among the Hindus, or that they were ignorant of the advantages of organized political protest. Urban life in Madras, by its very complexity and competitiveness, was compelling many Hindus to redefine their relationship to each other. When the Hindus first migrated to the city, caste bodies emerged to regulate the activities of their members and protect their traditional rights from encroachment by rival groups. However, the rapid changes that overtook Madras following the establishment of British power in the area, coupled with the slow erosion of certain traditional institutions and habits, called for relationships other than those based upon kinship and caste.

An early example of this new kind of relationship was the Hindu Literary Society. Founded during the 1830s, this body admitted members from different Hindu castes and occupations. Within its ranks were found Brahmins as well as non-Brahmins, Hindu pundits as well as merchants. This society held periodic meetings and lectures, delved into the country's history and literature, and took an informed interest in current issues. Though not exactly a voluntary association, it was the nearest to one to be found in Madras during the first half

of the nineteenth century.

The Hindu Literary Society became somewhat inactive during the 1840s, at a time when the anti-missionary agitation was reaching new heights. This agitation, among other things, had resulted in a heightened sense of Hindu, communal solidarity in Madras. There were appeals for a voluntary association to give effective direction to this new born Hindu consciousness. Some Hindu leaders, notably Srinivasa Pillay and Lakshmanarsu Chetty, however, favored the idea of reviving the Hindu Literary Society, hoping thereby to instill new vigor and purpose into its activities. In March 1846 a meeting was held in Madras to revive the Society. Srinivasa Pillay, while calling for unity among the Hindus, argued that failure to achieve it would be "a great bar to their political advancement."⁵⁰

This attempt to breathe new life into the Society failed, but failure only underlined the need for a new political association which would give expression to the growing Hindu solidarity in Madras.

The initiative to form a political organization came not, however, from Madras but from Bengal, where the British Indian Association was launched in October 1851. Formed for "a period of not less than three years," the association's immediate aim was to voice India's grievances during the coming inquiry into the affairs of the English East India Company. Believing that its representations would carry "great weight if they were made simultaneously by the natives of every part of British India, or by a Society having just pretensions to represent them," the British Indian Association solicited the collaboration of other Indian centers. Madras was among those invited to cooperate, either by forming a branch body affiliated with the British Indian Association or by having an independent association with broadly similar objectives. This invitation was discussed in February 1852 at "a large meeting of the Native Inhabitants of the Presidency," and it was then decided to form a

Madras Branch of the British Indian Association. The constitution of the parent body was adopted and a Committee of Management was elected to discharge the routine matters of the branch association.⁵¹

It is apparent that this association was largely the creation of the Hindu caucus which had spearheaded the opposition to the missionaries during the preceding decade. The caucus consisted mainly of merchants belonging to the Tamil and Telugu non-Brahmin castes. The dominant figure was undoubtedly Lakshmanarasu Chetty. His popularity among the Hindus of Madras stemmed partly from his courageous fight against official involvement in missionary operations and partly from his readiness to sacrifice his wealth in the cause of Hindu interests. The *Crescent*, for example, was known to be run at considerable loss to Lakshmanarasu Chetty. He brought into the Committee of Management a number of Hindu merchants, notably, P. Appasamy Pillay, a senior partner of the agency firm of P. Appasamy Pillay & Co., P. Veeraperumal Pillay, a partner in the same firm, and A. Alwar Chetty, proprietor of a large provision firm in Black Town.⁵²

But it would be wrong to conclude that this Association was exclusively a body of the Hindu merchants. Other interests were also represented. C. Yagambaram Mudaliar, its first president, was a rich *mirasdar* with extensive landed property in the *mofussil*. Representing the small Western-educated class were V. Sadagopah Charlu and V. Ramanuja Chari, both graduates of Madras High School. It was Ramanuja Chari who filled the position of Secretary of the Association. Indeed, as the Torture Commission reported in 1854, these leaders constituted "a fair representation of the Hindu wealth and influence of the Presidency."⁵³ Exercising influence from outside the Association was Harley, editor of the *Crescent* and trusted aide of Lakshmanarasu Chetty.

Relations between the British Indian Association and the Madras Branch ran into difficulties

from the start. The Madras leaders found their freedom of action "unexpectedly impeded by the union of the Madras Association with that of Calcutta." More important, there were differences over the question of reform proposals to be submitted to the British Parliament. These differences became evident when Bengal drafted a petition which, according to Lakshmanarasu Chetty, related "almost wholly to the plans and recommendations of the change of government and for the exaltation of the higher classes of Hindu," while ignoring the "grand object" for which the Association was founded, namely, "the plain representation of tangible grievances and asking remedies thereto." What took the situation to the brink was the decision of the Bengali leaders to circulate the petition in England without securing prior approval of Madras. The leaders of Madras, resenting this "want of proper respect for their opinion," and, in view of "the uncertainty of the expenditure attending a connection with the Calcutta Association," decided to form an independent organization to serve the interests of South India. The new body, called the Madras Native Association (hereafter referred to as MNA), was inaugurated at a meeting in July 1852.⁵⁴

The immediate task before this association was to present its case in a formal petition to the British Parliament. Data were painstakingly collected, and an appeal was launched for funds to cover expenses, estimated at Rs 50,000. By December 1852 the document was completed, with Harley putting the finishing touches, and a public meeting was convened to seek endorsement before dispatching it to England. The MNA summarized at the beginning of its very lengthy petition what it regarded as "the main grievances and wants" of South India:

That the grievances of your Petitioners arise principally from the excessive taxation, and the vexations which accompany its collection; and the insufficiency, delay, and expense of

the Company's Courts of Law; and their chief wants are the construction of roads, bridges, and works for the supply of irrigation; and a better provision for the education of the people; they also desire a reduction of the public expenditure and a form of local government more generally conducive to the happiness of the subjects and the prosperity of the country.

THE MNA was sharply critical of the Company's rule and dealt in detail with the shortcomings of the revenue and judicial system in the Madras Presidency. Some of its harshest criticisms, however, were reserved for the religious policies of the Indian authorities. The MNA objected strongly to the Caste Disabilities Removal Act, and charged that in its implementation it had been "stretched, even beyond the principle on which it was professedly framed." It also took exception to the diversion of state funds to missionary schools under the grants-in-aid system, contending that such a policy would tend to "distinctly identify" the state with missionary work. The British Parliament was also asked to legislate, disallowing the Indian authorities' enactment of laws which caused "insult and outrage" to the Indians and their religions.⁵⁵

This criticism of the British authorities, and particularly the strictures on their religious policies, created a split within the ranks of the MNA. One faction, led by Srinivasa Pillay, decided to secede, aggrieved at the tone and much of the content of the petition.

It must however be pointed out that there had always been an element of friction between Srinivasa Pillay and Lakshmanarasu Chetty, stemming principally from their conception of the role that the British Raj should play in effecting social change in India. Srinivasa Pillay, who visualized an India free from the shackles of caste, superstition, and poverty, believed that the British rulers had a part to play in bringing about this

transformation. He wanted the Indians to give whole-hearted support to their rulers in achieving this grand design. Srinivasa Pillay had a long record of service in various charity and other organizations, including the Monegar Choultry, the Pachaiyappa Charities, and the Madras Literary Society. In these bodies, he had endeavored to cultivate cordial ties with the Europeans, be they officials, merchants, or missionaries, as he believed that such ties would strengthen the bond of goodwill between India and the West and elicit European help in the regeneration of the Indian people.

Lakshmanarasu Chetty, on the other hand, did not share much of Srinivasa Pillay's zeal for rapid Westernization or for seeking British aid to bring about social change in India. He was not opposed to social change per se* but he believed that change must come from within the community rather than from without. He was strongly opposed to the missionaries or the state, albeit an alien one, meddling in the religious and social affairs of the Indian people. Religious neutrality, Lakshmanarasu Chetty believed, was the correct policy for the British rulers to adopt. Where they departed from this, he wanted the Indians to declare their opposition and appeal to the Court of Directors and the British Parliament for redress.

After the break with the MNA, Srinivasa Pillay and his supporters formed the Hindu Progressive Improvement Society in November 1852. The program of this body included the promotion of widow remarriage, the encouragement of female education, and

* In 1864, when Keshub Chandra Sen visited Madras, Lakshmanarasu Chetty vigorously protested against "the absurd and injurious institution of caste." He also declared that he was for "a long time a zealous admirer" of the Brahmo Samaj. See K. C. Sen, *Diary in Madras and Bombay* (Calcutta, 1887), p. 16.

the uplifting of the depressed castes.⁵⁶ Many of Srinivasa Pillay's coadjutors in this venture were his Hindu friends, long associated with him in the management of charitable organizations, such as the Monegar Choultry and Pachaiyappa Charities.

His closest ally was M. Venkataroylu Naidu, a pleader in the Sadr court, who shared many of Srinivasa Pillay's ideas on the regeneration of India. Venkataroylu Naidu was born into a poor family, and his education was largely financed by charitable friends and relatives. When he entered government service, promotions came rapidly, but he was summarily dismissed by the Tweeddale Administration for allegedly transmitting official papers to the *Crescent*. He resorted to the court to prove his innocence but he never regained his post and he decided to enter the legal profession. Despite these misfortunes, Venkataroylu Naidu harbored no hostility towards the British. He fervently believed that Indians could only advance "by approaching closer and closer to their rulers" and called for "an entire identification of European and Native interests" to bring about the regeneration of India.⁵⁷ For many years he had been a vigorous advocate of widow remarriage, and wrote often in the columns of the local newspapers urging some action.

In July 1853 Venkataroylu Naidu started his own paper, the *Rising Sun*, mainly to focus discussion on the social problems affecting the Hindu community. In the same year, with the death of Srinivasa Pillay, he assumed charge of the Hindu Progressive Improvement Society and continued to support the causes his predecessor had championed. Schools were established for children of the depressed castes; scholarships were given to needy students; and support was obtained for social legislation, like the Widow Remarriage Act of 1856.⁵⁸ Venkataroylu Naidu was also anxious to provide the youth of Madras with the opportunity to read widely and acquire the facility of public speaking. Two societies, called the Hindu Reading Room and the

Hindu Debating Society, were founded and they attracted students from the various educational institutions in Madras. Government support was welcomed, mainly to acquire official publications free of charge, and prominent Europeans were invited to deliver lectures or conduct discussion groups.

Through such means, Venkataroylu Naidu hoped to stimulate the spirit of inquiry which he believed would effect "a mighty revolution in India."⁵⁹ But such grandiose hopes were rather misplaced in the conservative world of mid-nineteenth century Madras. Hindu opinion was hardly prepared to accept the radical ideas emanating from the leaders of the Hindu Progressive Improvement Society. Venkataroylu Naidu died in 1863, and with him died many of his projects, including the *Rising Sun*.⁶⁰

The MNA was not adversely affected by the secession of Srinivasa Pillay and his friends. If anything, their secession strengthened the hand of the faction led by Lakshmanarasu Chetty, which then pressed ahead for political and economic reform in South India. Throughout the 1850s, the period of its active existence, the MNA remained a vigilant, if unsparing, critic of the government's policies and actions. In 1852 it had called for a full-scale inquiry into Indian affairs before the Charter of the Company be renewed. This demand was supported by other similar associations in India, as well as the Indian Reform Society which had been formed in London in March 1853, but the British Government rejected the request.

The MNA was not despondent. In October 1853, when Danby Seymour, Chairman of the Indian Reform Society visited India to make an on-the-spot investigation, the MNA nominated two of its leading members to accompany him on a tour of the *mofussil*. The party visited a number of centers, including Cuddalore, Trichinopoly, Kumbaconam, Salem, Tinnevelly, Calicut, and Mangalore.⁶¹ From the evidence he gathered, Seymour was convinced of the validity of the general complaints which the MNA had listed in its petition to the British

Parliament. On his return to England, Seymour called for an inquiry into the land tenure system in South India, and alleged that excessive land tax had led to many abuses in its collection, including the use of torture by officials.⁶² The Madras authorities agreed to investigate these charges and appointed a Torture Commission which found evidence of torture perpetrated by Indian revenue and police officials.⁶³

One of the problems with which the MNA had to contend stemmed directly from its relationship with the local officials. Until the formation of this body, the Madras authorities had been able to discharge their responsibilities largely immune to public scrutiny or sustained criticism. The advent of the MNA altered the situation somewhat, and officials soon found that they had to face a small, but active, band of Hindu leaders determined to probe into governmental affairs, criticize policies, and eagerly expose official misdemeanors. What irked officials even more was the MNA's method of securing redress of its grievances: not by directing its complaints to the local authorities but by appealing directly to the British Parliament. Such tactics, the officials lamented, were subversive of their authority and encouraged unwarranted Parliamentary interference in Indian affairs. Moreover, they bemoaned that the civil service in India was being "denigrated from all sides," including by such respectable organs as *The Times*.⁶⁴

However, official antagonism towards the MNA did not manifest itself openly until Seymour's visit to South India. Seymour's inquiries into the methods of revenue collection, and especially his efforts to gather evidence of the use of torture, annoyed local officials. Also irritating was the attempt of the two leaders of the MNA who accompanied Seymour to establish branch associations in the *mofussil*. Local leaders in Cuddalore, Trichinopoly, Salem, and Tinnevelly were persuaded to start branches as a means of helping the MNA with funds and information.⁶⁵

In South Arcot, the Collector intervened to put an end to what was called "this Extortion."⁶⁶ In 1854 a more effective way was found to undermine political activity in the *mofussil*. Following the discovery in the Guntur district of a case where certain agents, claiming to represent the MNA, had raised subscriptions on promises of securing tax remission, the Madras Government issued a proclamation throughout the districts warning agents and subscribers that such actions were liable to criminal prosecution. The MNA protested its innocence, and the Torture Commission absolved it of any connection with the Guntur agents, but the Madras authorities steadfastly refused to withdraw the proclamation, the effect of which was to frighten the branch associations into abandoning their ties with the parent body in the metropolis.⁶⁷

Despite this clash with the local authorities, the MNA showed no perceptible signs of abdicating its role as the watchdog of Hindu interests in South India. Petitions were regularly sent to the British Parliament. Public meetings were held from time to time to discuss local grievances. Addressees were presented to important dignitaries enumerating the demands of the Association or acknowledging their services to the country. One such address was presented to Lord Canning in February 1856 on his assumption of the governor-generalship.⁶⁸

Also, a continuing watch was maintained on the activities of local officials, and misdemeanors or highhanded behavior promptly exposed. One such incident involved a *tahsildar* accused of torturing some weavers in Chingleput district to realize arrears in loom tax. The MNA claimed, in a petition to Parliament in January 1856, that the *tahsildar* had acted on the strength of an order issued by the Collector.⁶⁹ The incident was discussed in the House of Lords, while the Madras Board of Revenue initiated its own inquiry which ultimately led to the dismissal of the *tahsildar* and the censure of the Collector.⁷⁰ This, however, was not

the kind of justice which the MNA was seeking. It had only wanted to demonstrate that, contrary to what the Torture Commission reported, Indian officials resorted to practices of this nature only under instructions or covert encouragement of their European superiors.

One subject which continued to generate controversy throughout the fifties was the question of Christian proselytization. Hindu suspicions about official collusion with the missionaries were never completely allayed, and from time to time Hindu leaders alleged a pro-missionary bias in the actions of the local authorities.

This underlying mistrust of the executive was best illustrated during the riots in Tinnevelly in December 1858. Amid rising religious tension in South India as a result of renewed missionary agitation against the policy of religious neutrality, the decision of the European Magistrate in Tinnevelly to allow a Christian burial party to use a street occupied by the higher castes led to a violent clash in which ten Hindus were killed and nineteen wounded. The Madras Government approved the action of the district officials, and ordered the rigorous prosecution of those suspected of rioting.

The MNA was unhappy with this order and convened a public meeting in April 1859 to discuss this and other related issues. Although boycotted by Venkataroylu Naidu and his friends, the meeting attracted many Muslims from the metropolis and some Hindu leaders from the *mofussil*. The meeting approved a memorial to the Secretary of State for India which attributed the Tinnevelly disturbance to the machinations of the missionaries. It was claimed that the magistrate's decision to reverse the old ruling, disallowing Christians the use of the street occupied by the higher castes, was the result of missionary pressure. The MNA was equally critical of the way in which the Tinnevelly investigations had been handled. It complained that, instead of appointing an impartial commission, the

Madras Government had entrusted the task to persons "implicated in the unhappy affair."⁷¹

Sir Charles Trevelyan, who had just assumed the governorship of the Presidency, accepted the memorial as "a genuine expression of the Native mind" and regarded it as creditable that "the faithful people of the South have had recourse to the legal and constitutional mode of petition" in airing their grievances. Though not always agreeing with the sentiments expressed in the memorial, he nevertheless felt that missionary agitation in England had created widespread fear among the inhabitants of South India that the existing policy might be changed and of the "tremendous machine of the Government being brought into the field against them." Trevelyan believed that a firm and authoritative declaration upholding the policy of religious neutrality would put an end to these fears.⁷²

The Tinnevelly riots of 1858 provided the last occasion when the MNA held a mass meeting in Madras. Though not apparent at that time, the active days of the Association were gradually drawing to a close. During the next three years, the MNA functioned in a very sporadic fashion. In April 1860 it memorialized the British Parliament calling for the restoration of the Tanjore Raj,⁷³ and in the same month petitioned the Indian Legislative Council protesting against the proposed license duty and income tax.⁷⁴ In March 1862 a deputation from the Association called on the Governor of Madras to plead the case of the *mirasdars* in respect of rights over waste land.⁷⁵ Four months later, the MNA was said to be "practically defunct," and moves were afoot for the formation of a new "Native Association."⁷⁶ Thus, after a decade of active life, the MNA had retired into oblivion.

Whatever the reasons for its demise, and these are by no means clear from available evidence,⁷⁷ the MNA was the first real attempt at organizing a political association along Western lines in South India. Although founded by the Hindu commercial elite in Madras, which felt its established

traditions threatened by the actions of the Christian missions, this association cannot be regarded as the mere mouthpiece of the narrow interests of this group, nor was it the platform for the ventilation of specifically religious grievances. In effect, its signal contribution lay in its elaborate criticisms of the high level of public taxation in South India and its graphic portrayal of the corrupt machinery through which revenue was being collected. That the Madras Government took heed of these criticisms, reflected for instance in its decision to reduce land tax in 1855, is a testimony to the adroitness of the leaders of the MNA in harnessing the instruments of modern political protest to secure redress of their grievances.

The dissolution of the MNA symbolized the decline in the importance of the Hindu commercial elite in the civic life of Madras. Propelled into prominence in the 1840s on the crest of the anti-missionary sentiment then prevailing in South India, this elite had given institutional expression to its power by organizing the MNA. However, as anti-missionary feelings slowly subsided during the 1860s, the influence of this elite also waned, and a rival group emerged to provide an alternative focus of leadership in the Madras Presidency. Members of the latter group were products of the Madras High School who had achieved distinction in the service of the British Indian administration. To understand the influence that this group wielded it is important to have some idea of its educational background as well as the strategic position that it occupied in the government.

2. The New Learning and the Advent of the Administrative Elite

BIRTH OF AN ELITE SCHOOL

In April 1841 an event was celebrated in Madras which was to have important consequences, not only for the metropolis, but for South India as a whole. This was the formal inauguration of the so-called High School of the Madras University, better known as the Madras High School. At a ceremony of pomp and grandeur, attended by the Nawab of Arcot and "the principal members of Society at the Presidency, both European and Native," the Governor of Madras, Lord Elphinstone, told his audience that the proceedings they were witnessing should be regarded as "the dawn of a new era rather than the opening of a new school." He went on to say that the success of this institution would be the true vindication of British commitment to work for "the improvement and welfare of the country."¹

Although Elphinstone might have exaggerated the significance of a venture in which he was largely instrumental, his sentiments reflected the view of many contemporary observers who saw the launching of the Madras High School as the first serious attempt to disseminate Western education in South India. Elphinstone, when he assumed the governorship in 1837, was perturbed to discover that more than three decades of British rule in the

Madras Presidency had only yielded a plethora of educational schemes which at best had only been partially implemented. In effect, all that the government could show was a Normal School started recently in Madras to train teachers. Elphinstone was dissatisfied with the role that the government had played in fostering education, convinced as he was that Western education provided a splendid instrument for the regeneration of the subject peoples. Cautious not to repeat the errors of the past, but nevertheless ambitious to formulate a comprehensive and lasting educational scheme, he devoted much time to studying the official papers on the subject, acquainted himself with contemporary thinking on education, and consulted both officials and nonofficials in Madras, and elsewhere, as to ways in which the government could advance education in South India.

The result of Elphinstone's labors was the production of his "Minute on Education" of December 1839. This document was notable not so much for originality as for its concise and clear definition of what the state should do in the field of education. Elphinstone echoed two important ideas which had by now become orthodox official thinking at the highest policy-making levels. First, he accepted Bentinck's proposition that "the great object of the British Government ought to be the promotion of European literature and science among the natives of India, and that all funds appropriated would be best employed on English education alone."² Second, Elphinstone subscribed to the "filtration theory" of education which had been strongly championed by the Court of Directors in London for some years. He did not believe in mass education, nor did such experiments seem feasible to him given the scarce resources at the disposal of the government. His scheme was designed to train an elite, a chosen few from the higher strata of Indian society, which was to receive the high literary culture of the West through the medium of the English language. On completion of its educational training, this elite

group was expected to play the dual role of diffusing its enlightenment to the rest of the community and of shouldering the responsibilities of high office in the government.

The scheme which Elphinstone proposed was modelled on the Scottish educational system, consisting of a college to impart instruction in the higher branches of Western literature, philosophy, and science, and a high school to give more elementary courses in the above subjects, besides teaching the vernacular languages. The high school was to be launched immediately, and a University Board was constituted in May 1840 to help in its organization.³

The first President of the Board was George Norton, Elphinstone's own choice and a popular one among the Hindus in Madras. Elphinstone was discerning enough to recognize that the success of his scheme depended to a large extent on winning Hindu cooperation. Norton's selection went some distance in securing this, while the reservation of seven of the fifteen seats in the Board for Hindus and Muslims also helped. At the same time, Hindu fears about the subversion of their religion were allayed by the ruling that no religious doctrines would be taught in the institution, nor religious books supplied for that purpose. Admission was open to all creeds and groups, although care was to be taken "to avoid whatever may tend to violate or offend the religious feelings of any class." These conditions were embodied in the "Fundamental Rules" which the University Board drafted in 1841 to regulate the internal workings of the Madras High School.⁴

Started with such assumptions, it was inevitable that social distinctions would come to dictate the character of this institution. On the one hand, school fees were fixed at the inordinately high rate of four rupees per month, primarily to prevent "a large influx of Pupils from an inferior class" who might deter "the more respectable families" from sending their children to the Madras

High School. Attempts to reduce the fees were resisted by the University Board for almost a decade on the plea that such a step would defeat the very purpose for which the institution was founded.⁵ Also, students from the "polluting castes" were denied admission by the University Board which appeared overzealous in respecting the susceptibilities of the high caste Hindus.

It was not until 1851 that the first Harijan students entered the portals of the Madras High School, and their arrival was greeted by a loud Hindu protest which led to the exodus of some high caste students, while a Hindu member of the University Board tendered his resignation. The Board was embarrassed by this opposition but stood firm to weather the crisis, while belatedly declaring that social distinctions would not be recognized in the institution.⁶

However, this change did not alter in any radical sense the composition of the Madras High School. Its students continued to come mainly from Brahmin and higher non-Brahmin caste groups, with a small sprinkling of Indian Christians, Eurasians, and Muslims.

The man who more than anyone else stamped his personality on the Madras High School was Eyre Burton Powell, the Headmaster, and subsequently Principal of Presidency College. The University Board had wanted a head who possessed not only "scholastic acquirements" but also "a willingness to bend those faculties for a time to the patient tuition of Native Youths emerging from a total ignorance of civilized learning." Help was sought from Mountstuart Elphinstone, a former Governor of Bombay, and he recommended Powell who had recently taken his B.A. from Cambridge with "the highest grade of honor."⁷

Powell was anxious to mold the Madras High School along the lines of an English public school, an ideal which was shared by George Norton, President of the University Board. The Headmaster was invested with unshackled discretion to carry out

instruction and discipline in the school. He interviewed youths seeking admission, and his recommendations were invariably accepted by the standing sub-committee responsible for student admissions. Within the institution, strict rules governed the conduct of the students.

Powell did not believe in the efficacy of physical punishment, nor were his colleagues similarly disposed. Instead, discipline was to be enforced by winning the confidence of the pupils, by cultivating friendships, and by seeking the help of senior students who were appointed Praeposters with general authority over student discipline. Powell took almost a parental interest in the welfare of his students, listened to their problems, helped them in their studies during his spare time, and coached them in sports. He was very fond of astronomy, and he invited interested students to his observatory to tell them about the mysteries of the solar system and the eclipses of the moon. The importance of literary and debating societies was also recognized. Powell urged his students to organize regular debates and lectures, and sometimes participated in these activities to set a personal example. Students found in him a model in the development of their ideals, values, and tastes, and a generous patron when in financial trouble. Powell evinced particular interest in the bright boys who were often marked out for special awards and other favors.

Not surprisingly, many of his students regarded him with affection and attachment which they treasured for much of their adult life. One of Powell's distinguished students, T. Madava Rao, said of his Headmaster in 1883: ". . . I love him, I respect him, I admire him, I reverence him as my great 'Guru' . . . How he laboured for us! What singular devotion--what rare enthusiasm was his! He made our study literally a pleasure."⁸ Indeed, as Kamesvara Aiyar says, Powell was "a typical Acharya of the old days of India, whose relation to the pupil was a life-long tie."⁹

The courses offered in the Madras High School were obviously aimed at imparting a certain quality of substantive knowledge of Western science and literature. However, it was not the intention of the founders of the institution to equip students for any particular calling, except perhaps the public service. The aim was to stimulate and develop the intellectual faculties of the students which was believed to be the hallmark of civilized existence. During the first two years, students were taught grammar, reading exercises, arithmetic, and writing. Mastery of these subjects would provide the students with the necessary foundation to pursue courses in history, natural philosophy, moral philosophy, geography, and mathematics.¹⁰ Normally, a student would take four years to complete the entire course and secure the Proficient's degree. Those who aspired to an honors degree spent an additional year doing intensive work on certain subjects, including the study of prescribed texts. Powell and his colleagues were rigorous in the standards they set, and promotions from one class to another were only granted when all the requirements were met with.¹¹ This factor, coupled with the large drop-out of students in the lower classes owing to financial and other reasons, severely restricted the numbers obtaining the Proficient's degree. Indeed, between 1841-55, that is the period before the college branch was opened, only 36 students had secured this degree, although student enrollment had grown steadily from 67 to 221 over the same period.¹² The institution, then, remained loyal to Elphinstone's ideals: only the deserving few, an elite group, were to be honored with degrees.

When the Madras High School was launched, it was the ambition of its sponsors that it should ultimately "surpass all that had been done or attempted before in India."¹³ Drawing on their knowledge of educational experiments in India and United Kingdom, Elphinstone and his coadjutors had given considerable thought to the eventual

formation of a full-fledged college giving courses in science, natural philosophy, law and jurisprudence, medicine, and engineering. The collegiate branch, which was an integral part of the original Elphinstone scheme, was to be organized as soon as the first batch of Proficients graduated from the High School, with departments of science, philosophy, and law. Plans for the opening of engineering and medical colleges were finalized in 1842, the details largely drawn up by the University Board and approved in principle by Elphinstone before he relinquished his governorship in the same year.¹⁴

But as it turned out, these schemes were left unattended for a decade after the departure of Elphinstone. The reasons for this inaction are many and complex, and little purpose will be served to discuss them here at length. George Norton and his friends in the University Board believed that Tweeddale was the main obstruction and alleged that he had allowed his pro-missionary bias to influence his educational policies.¹⁵ Tweeddale claimed that the scheme of his predecessor was too ambitious and that the anticipated support from Indian benefactors had not materialized. As relations between the Tweeddale Administration and the University Board deteriorated, a bitter conflict started in Madras between the missionaries and their opponents over such issues as the introduction of religious education in the Madras High School, the reduction of school fees, and the extension of preference to Proficients seeking admission into the public service. This controversy continued into the governorship of Sir Henry' Pottinger, and it was not until the reconstitution of the University Board in April 1852 that any concrete steps were taken to implement some of the plans chalked out a decade earlier.

One result of this controversy was the concentration of state patronage on a single educational institution, the Madras High School. Expenditure on this school averaged Rs 30,000 annually during the 1840s,¹⁶ which meant the accumulation of a fair

surplus over the years from the original educational apportionment of Rs 50,000 per annum. The University Board would have welcomed it if this surplus could have been utilized to build suitable premises for the school. Initially, the institution had rented out the former post office building in Egmore, but the University Board found this arrangement unsatisfactory and called for the construction of a suitable structure which would not only provide adequate classrooms but also staff quarters, playgrounds, and other facilities. The Court of Directors was sympathetic, as it felt that such an edifice would have "a powerful effect in attracting public confidence, and giving stability and popularity to the establishment."¹⁷ But Governor Tweeddale remained skeptical, and the new buildings were not constructed until the early 1870s.

Of greater importance was the dispute over the starting of the so-called "superior provincial schools" in the *mofussil*. Elphinstone had proposed in 1841 the establishment of four such schools to cater to the needs of the four linguistic regions which made up the Madras Presidency. His departure led to inaction, stemming partly from the opposition of the Court of Directors who wanted the consolidation of the Madras High School before embarking on other ventures.¹⁸ More than a decade elapsed before the provincial schools were established, but this delay gave the Madras High School a headstart and ensured that its graduates would receive in the 1840s the benefits from higher education available to the others during the 1850s and after.

What were the social origins of these graduates? Of the thirty-six students who had obtained the Proficient's degree up to 1855, no less than twenty were Brahmins, twelve non-Brahmin Hindus, three Eurasians and one Indian Christian.¹⁹ It is significant that the Brahmins, constituting a little over 3 per cent of the population of the Madras Presidency, accounted for over half the

total Proficients. This trend was to continue throughout the nineteenth century and will be explained later. However, it is worth noting here that the Brahmin subcastes which took advantage of the opportunities offered by the Madras High School were the Desasthas, Sri-Vaishnavas, and Smarthas. These were the groups which had wielded administrative power in the Presidency and, doubtless, they recognized that Western education was essential for their continued access to the public service. In fact, a significant number of the Proficients came from families of administrative backgrounds, from sons of Dewans of Indian States to those whose parents were low-paid clerks in the Madras Revenue Department. In many cases, these families lived in Madras or nearby districts like Chingleput and North Arcot, although in some instances students came from more remote areas such as Tanjore.

RECRUITMENT INTO THE ADMINISTRATION

It was widely assumed by those closely connected with the Madras High School that the alumni of this institution would furnish the new generation of administrators capable of holding important positions in the government. Both Elphinstone and George Norton were confident that this new corps of administrators would be men of a different breed, equipped not only with Western knowledge but also imbibing a new ethos alien to India.

No doubt, altruistic considerations demanded that this new corps of Indian officials be raised. If British commitment to the idea of the regeneration of its conquered subjects was to have any tangible meaning, it was essential that an honest and efficient Indian civil service be created, especially as the old administrative elites have been found to be singularly deficient in these attributes. However, British policy was also governed by reasons of expediency and self-interest. Elphinstone and Norton were convinced that the new

learning would produce an elite group fundamentally loyal to the British Raj, one which could be expected to play a mediative role between the alien ruler and the subject people. In the words of George Norton, Western education was the panacea "to the very regeneration of the (Indian) people, and their permanent loyalty and amalgamation with the British nation."²⁰ It was to be a loyalty not founded on narrow self-interest but born out of a common attachment to values inherited from Western culture.

No one showed greater consciousness of the need to imbue the rising generation with these values than Powell himself. Convinced that his students were the chosen ones, he nurtured in them the virtues of moral rectitude, a sense of responsibility, and a capacity for sustained work. These virtues he continued to stress even after his students had left school and attained high positions in life. Powell also set rigorous academic standards as he believed that intellectual attainment was an essential element for success in public service.²¹ He also tried to impress on the general public and the local authorities in particular that the Proficient's degree was only conferred on those who had demonstrated high intellectual attainment. Part of the examination for this degree was held in public, lasted many days, and attracted several Europeans and Indians. High government functionaries were also enlisted as examiners, and in this way officials came to have a first hand knowledge of the ability of the scholars.

However, when the first Proficients appeared on the scene, little had been done at an official level to receive them into the public service. This was as much the result of Elphinstone's departure as the reluctance of the heads of departments to surrender their control of patronage. Elphinstone had taken some preliminary steps to give education its due place in administrative recruitment. He had discussed with his senior official colleagues the desirability of "requiring all Natives

and others to pass an educational examination before they are admitted into the public service." The University Board was asked to report, and it prepared a scheme for holding these tests in Madras before extending them to the *mofussil* as well.²² But Elphinstone left before these proposals were accepted by the government and his successor, Tweeddale, began to drag his feet. In 1845, when the University Board reiterated its call for some kind of educational tests for entry into the administration, the Tweeddale Administration retorted that as education was backward in the *mofussil* it would be "premature and detrimental to public interests" to institute such tests.²³ The matter rested there for another decade.

To the early graduates of the Madras High School this was a hard decision to take. They had been led to believe during their student days that they could seek a place in the public service consistent with their academic attainments. Now they found that their degrees did not earn them automatic entry, and they were compelled to depend on their own devices or court the goodwill of influential European officials. The first Proficient, C. V. Ranganada Sastri, for example, found a patron in G. J. Casamajor, a judge of the Provincial Court of Appeal and Circuit, who not only financed his education but also helped him to secure his first appointment as head clerk in the Subordinate Judge's Court at Chittoor.²⁴ Another Proficient, V. Rama Iyengar, obtained his appointment, as translator in the Mahratta *Kacheri* of the Madras Board of Revenue, largely with the help of its Secretary, Thomas Pycroft, who was impressed with the academic attainments of the young candidate.²⁵ Some Proficients, like Seshia Sastri, had to cultivate the friendship of their European patrons the hard way. Sastri waited for several days at the gate of Henry Montgomery, Member of the Board of Revenue, and "salaamed the Saheb whenever he drove out or returned from his morning drive or ride." He was eventually rewarded with an acting clerkship

in the Board of Revenue.²⁶ Appointments at such subordinate levels were the rule rather than the exception, the Proficients accepting such humble positions as clerks, writers, translators, and interpreters in the hope of rapid promotions.

From the select band of thirty-six Proficients who had passed out from the Madras High School, no less than twenty-five had secured appointments in the judicial or revenue line of the Madras administration. As Elphinstone had predicted, and as George Norton and Powell had fondly hoped, the public service had proved to be the largest employer of the first generation of Western educated class in South India. This stemmed partly from absence of opportunities elsewhere,* but to a greater extent it should be attributed to the high esteem in which public service was held among the upper caste Hindus.

No doubt the subordinate positions in which the Proficients found themselves at the start caused unhappiness and even resentment. They complained that their scholastic attainments had not been adequately rewarded nor their talent suitably employed. To such graduates, Powell and Norton counselled patience and loyal service. "Sacrifice the Present and secure the Future," wrote Powell to Seshia Sastri in 1849. Norton advised Sastri that his career could best be advanced by faithful

* C. Karunakara Menon's characterization of these Proficients is worth quoting here: "The young men with whom Seshia [Sastri] studied were all of one mind in this respect. Their thoughts and aspirations were moulded alike, and they were all trained in the same manner. There was then no public life in which they could distinguish themselves. There were no parliamentary laurels awaiting them. They had no intention to shine as scholars or writers. They could not think of shining as warriors or heroes." See his *A Critical Essay on Sir Seshia Sastri, K.C.S.I.* (Madras, 1903), pp. 1-2.

service to his European superior: "If you make the best use of your opportunities--in sedulously attending to all that Mr. Elliot directs or explains, and to all the duties he requires of you, you will learn those qualifications which will raise you to a high post perhaps eventually and at any rate ensure your profitable employment hereafter." Seshia Sastri took heed of the advice and within three years of joining service was elevated to the post of *tahsildar* at Masulipatam.²⁷ This was not an isolated instance. Many of Seshia Sastri's fellow graduates were equally quick in climbing the administrative ladder. It was this quick mobility which led the University Board to claim in 1851 that there was "no instance of any Proficient having failed to gain a position likely to lead to a prosperous, and possibly to a distinguished, career in life."²⁸

However, not every Proficient believed that the avenues of rapid advancement lay within the administrative setup of the Madras Presidency. T. Madava Rao, for example, decided to throw up his subordinate position in the Accountant-General's Office in Madras to become tutor to the princes of Travancore. This was to prove the turning point in his life, and the beginning of a distinguished career in this Indian State. Sadagopah Charlu, a classmate of Madava Rao, began his career as a translator in the Sadr Court, but, unhappy with the prospects, he switched to law, became a qualified Pleader and built up a lucrative practice in Madras before his death in 1863. P. Rangiah Naidu began his life in an almost identical fashion. After serving for a few years as a translator in the Small Cause Court, he turned to law which enabled him to take an active part in public movements. Of course, there were some Proficients who had never trespassed the corridors of the Madras administration. One of them was Basil Lavery, a Eurasian, who became a teacher in Pachaiyappa School and a few years later its Principal.

However, there was no doubt whatsoever that

prestige and influence belonged to those Proficients who had staked their fortunes on public service. Their emergence as a powerful elite group in South India after the Mutiny was due to several factors, but principally to the thoroughgoing administrative changes initiated at the level of the Indian agency. In an earlier chapter, it was shown that widespread corruption had permeated the district administration and that, consequently, the Madras authorities had attempted to cleanse the system by revising the methods of recruitment into the Indian agency and by stressing the importance of Western education as a factor in improving the moral tone of the administration. These far-reaching changes were only taken under considerable pressure from the Board of Control in London. Sir Charles Wood, who as President of the Board of Control had borne the brunt of the criticisms directed against the Company rule during the Charter agitation, was anxious to promote some "internal improvements" in South India. In 1854 he chose Lord Harris as Governor of Madras to "infuse new blood" into the administration of that Presidency.²⁹ Among the reforms which Wood advocated was the recasting of the Indian agency, and especially the reduction of the influence of the Mahratta Brahmins.

On his arrival in Madras, Harris lost little time in carrying out an inquiry into the state of the local administration. The revelations of the recent years and the report of the Torture Commission convinced him that some reforms were necessary and urgent. In 1854 he abolished the use of Marathi as the language of revenue accounts, an obvious blow at the pervasive influence of the Mahratta Brahmins. In the following year, he accepted the recommendations of the Torture Commission to relieve revenue officials of their police duties, thereby reducing the concentration of power which in the past was a fruitful source of abuse.³⁰ A few months later, Harris won support of his local advisers to create the posts of Deputy and

Assistant Collectors along the lines of other Indian provinces. Sixty such posts were requested from the Indian authorities, to be evenly distributed among the twenty districts in the presidency, and recruitment to these positions was to be on the basis of proven administrative experience or educational merit. Although not sanguine about overturning immediately the dominance of the Mahratta Brahmins at the level of the district administration, Harris was convinced that the proposed changes would eventually achieve the same result as other social groups acquired Western education.³¹ There was little doubt that his hopes were pinned on the Madras High School becoming the nursery for the new cadre of district administrators.

Differences between the Indian and Madras governments held up the implementation of the scheme for the appointment of Deputy Collectors. The bone of contention was the number of such positions to be established, as Calcutta thought that the number demanded by Madras was excessive. An impasse resulted, and it was not until January 1859 that Calcutta finally yielded. Meanwhile, the Madras Government had drafted rules for holding competitive examinations for the Uncovenanted Service. Graduates of Arts and Law were exempted from the tests, while it was stressed that those aspiring for posts above Rs 50 per month should be proficient in English.³² The first examinations were held in November 1858: 492 candidates presented themselves, of whom 206 passed. The Madras Government, in a circular to all heads of departments, made it clear that future vacancies should only be filled by successful candidates, with the restriction that Tamils should not as a rule be appointed in Telugu districts and vice versa.³³

It was now apparent that at long last a clean break had been made with the old system of recruiting Indians into the administration. Caste, kinship, and matrimonial ties were finally discarded in favor of an open system of recruitment wherein the claims of aspirants would be assessed on the

basis of competitive tests or educational qualifications. Without doubt, this system favored those who had gone through an English-type education. In effect, the impetus which advocates of Western education in South India had been demanding for some time was now supplied, and the consequences of this change were far-reaching for the coming generations of Indian youth seeking high office and social prestige.

For the moment, it was the products of the Madras High School who emerged as the main beneficiaries of these changes. This was especially evident when the Madras Government began to look for "the most efficient men" to fill the newly-created posts of Deputy Collectors. Of course, some of the posts went to the older Indian officials holding positions of Head and Naib Sheristadars. They did not have superior English education, but their accumulated experience over the years and their record of loyal service made it difficult for the Madras Government to ignore their claims. But among the ranks of the outgoing Head and Naib Sheristadars were also a breed of younger men, essentially products of the Madras High School, who had joined service after 1845 at very subordinate levels, but through industry, honesty, and the help of their European patrons, had gained swift promotions to catch up with their elder, erstwhile compatriots.

It was from this younger group that some of the Deputy Collectors were chosen. Prominent in the first batch of forty Deputy Collectors appointed in March 1859 were A. Seshia Sastri, V. Rama Iyengar, C. Ranga Charlu, M. Sadashivam Pillay, A. Ramachandra Rao, T. Durmaroyan Mudali, R. Raghu-natha Rao, and C. Sama Rao, all students of the Madras High School.³⁴ Subsequent appointments included T. Muthusamy Iyer, P. Varada Chari, A. Srinivasa Rao, and V. Rajagopala Chari, also from the same institution, as well as P. Chentsal Rao, who had studied in the Scotch Mission School at Nellore. Nor did these younger men suffer by way

of seniority in relation to their elder and more experienced colleagues. Of the half dozen Deputy Collectors who held the rank of First Class in 1863, three were Proficients of the Madras High School, namely, Rama Iyengar, Seshia Sastri, and Ranga Charlu, each drawing a monthly salary of Rs 600.³⁵

Indicative of the measure of confidence which was commanded by this new breed of administrators was the way in which the Inam Commission was constituted in 1859. The Madras authorities had long wrestled with this controversial question which had led to interminable disputes with the *inam* holders and even precipitated an insurrection in Cuddapah in 1846 when the government attempted to resume some *inam* lands.³⁶ Eventually, the authorities decided on a full-scale inquiry and the Madras Inam Commission was set up to investigate all *inam* titles and extend proprietary rights to holders who could adduce evidence of long possession. Sir Charles Trevelyan, who succeeded Harris as Governor in 1859, felt that the task would "require trustworthiness and intellect of a high order. Fortunately the sifting which the Uncovenanted Service has lately undergone for the selection of Deputy Collectors places a large body of highly-qualified officers at our disposal."³⁷ He urged G. N. Taylor, the Inam Commissioner, to select his assistants from this class of officers. Taylor chose eleven Indians, all Deputy Collectors, of whom ten were products of the Madras High School and the other a student of the Scotch Mission School at Nellore. Among those whom he chose were Ranga Charlu, who was to be one of the two Special Assistants to the Commission, Rama Iyengar, Seshia Sastri, Muthusamy Iyer, and Chentsal Rao.³⁸ It was apparent to many in Madras in which direction the winds of official favor were then blowing in South India.

The work of the Inam Commission lasted for seven years. The Commission went from district to district, listening to claims submitted and

recognizing those which met its requirements. At the outset there was much suspicion and even hostility to its operations, partly caused by ill-founded fears as to what the Commission was seeking to do.³⁹ The first task of Taylor's assistants was to dispel these fears, and this was done fairly quickly by patient talks with *inamdar*s and by the care exercised in dealing with every claim. Progress was naturally slow, but both Trevelyan and Taylor were happy with the progress of the Commission and were lavish in their praise of the work of their Indian assistants. Taylor testified later that the success of the Inam Commission was "undoubtedly due to the admirable native agency it was my good fortune to employ." He claimed that without his Indian assistants' "intimate knowledge of landed tenures, the eminent ability, and indefatigable industry," the work of the Commission could never have been accomplished. He was particularly impressed by Ranga Charlu's ability, and bestowed high praise on his "intimate knowledge of native character, his excellent judgement, [and] his wonderful capacity for affairs."⁴⁰

By now such praise from the European superiors was almost commonplace. This was, indeed, the vindication of the confidence which a few European officials had placed on the products which Powell had trained in the Madras High School. Others, who had entertained doubts about the fitness of the Proficients, were now willing to acknowledge that this new breed of administrators was infinitely superior to their predecessors in industry as much as in integrity.

Trevelyan gave expression in 1860 to the general view that "the rising generation of Native officers who have been educated in the [Madras] High School and have since acquired a few years' administrative experience, are a remarkable set of men." They possessed, in his opinion, "more thoughtfulness--more stability of character than the corresponding Class in Bengal--and have already acquired the confidence of their European Superiors

and of their own Countrymen." In fact, he saw in these Indian administrators the kind of men who could be nominated to the Legislative Councils when the proposed constitutional changes were completed. Trevelyan was convinced that the virtues of this administrative elite could be traced to their Western education, which had instilled in them "a higher standard of morality" than what was prevalent in the country.⁴¹

This view was shared by John Bruce Norton, Government Pleader and an advocate of Western education in India. Norton contended in 1855 that the Indians who had acquired English education perforce "exhibited quite a new phase of a Hindu character. They are actuated by a European feeling of honour: they entertain an English sense of the meaning of the word Duty." He praised the administrative elite for creating "a new morality; that Office is no longer looked upon as the legalised opportunity for plunder, bribery extortion, intimidation, [and] corruption."⁴²

Once it had won such laurels from its European superiors, the administrative elite gradually annexed positions in the official hierarchy, which in the past were inaccessible to Indians. By the 1850s, it was recognized that educated Indians ought to be slowly introduced into the special departments of the Uncovenanted Service, notably, Salt, Sea Customs, Stamps, Registration, and Education; but headships of these departments were the monopoly of Europeans, often Covenanted Civilians. The first Indian to break into this European preserve was Rama Iyengar who in 1867 was appointed as Superintendent of Stamps at a monthly salary of Rs 1000. Eight years later he became Inspector-General of Registration, still the only Indian to head a department in the Madras Presidency.⁴³ It was a similar story in the judicial line. Here, the highest position thrown open to qualified Indians was that of the Principal Sadr Amin. But this was not for long. In 1859 Rangananda Sastri, the first Proficient of the Madras High School, was

given the acting Judgeship of the Court of Small Causes in Madras, largely at the prompting of Governor Trevelyan. Three years later he was confirmed and he continued to hold this office until his retirement in 1880.⁴⁴

A Proficient who attained greater eminence in the judicial service was T. Muthusamy Iyer. He had worked in several departments after entering government service in 1854. In 1859 he was one of the many graduates of the Madras High School to be appointed Deputy Collector, but, unlike his colleagues, he showed greater interest in judicial rather than revenue work. He had passed the Pleader's Test in 1856, and a decade later he took the degree of Bachelor of Law, obtaining a First, which was all the more remarkable because he had studied part-time. His superiors decided to use his talents to the best effect and appointed him a Judge of the Court of Small Causes, first in Madras and later in Madura. The apotheosis of his career came in July 1878 when he was appointed Sub-protom Judge of the Madras High Court, the first Indian to attain this status in South India, and thereby, breached what had, thus far, been the preserve of Covenanted Civilians and European barristers. Muthusamy Iyer was confirmed at the Bench in 1883, officiated briefly as Chief Justice in 1891, and "died in harness" four years later. For one who had started life as an assistant to a village accountant in Tanjore district, Muthusamy Iyer's rise was indeed meteoric.⁴⁵

Despite the many opportunities that came their way in the Madras Presidency, it was nevertheless in the Indian States that this "galaxy of notable administrators" was able to display its varied talents and achieve the kind of fame which earned it the accolade of posterity.⁴⁶ The man who blazed this trail was T. Madava Rao, who in 1849 had accepted the post of tutor to the princes of Travancore. Obviously, he found his usefulness in this position somewhat restricted, and decided to enter administrative service in 1853 as Deputy

Peshkar. Promotions came swiftly: in 1855 he was made Dewan Peshkar, and two years later duly elevated to Dewanship, thus emulating his father and uncle who had both been dewans of Travancore earlier in the century. This position was the summit of Indian aspirations in the nineteenth century, at least in so far as the Proficients of the Madras High School were concerned. As William Robinson, Senior Member of the Madras Revenue Board, remarked to Seshia Sastri in 1872, the dewanship of an Indian State was "quite the highest [post] open to the natives of this Presidency. For there you are truly a native ruling your own countrymen."⁴⁷ Indeed, here was a relatively large state, inhabited by millions of people, entrusted to the care of a young man of thirty who had barely four years of real administrative experience. But Madava Rao was equal to the occasion, and during his sixteen years as Dewan, he made Travancore "the Model State" in India. In 1873 Madava Rao accepted the Dewanship of Indore, and two years later moved to a similar position in Baroda. By the time he retired in 1882, Madava Rao had devoted twenty-four years of his life as ruler of three of the most important States in Central and South India. Undoubtedly, he was the outstanding statesman of South India during the nineteenth century--Fawcett called him "the Turgot of India."⁴⁸

Madava Rao's contemporaries in the Madras High School followed his lead. Seshia Sastri was Dewan of Travancore from 1880-87; Runga Charlu was Dewan of Mysore from 1881-83; and Raghunatha Rao was twice Dewan of Indore, in 1875-80 and 1886-88. Another student of Powell who attained prominence in the service of an Indian State was Sadashivam Pillay, who became Chief Justice of the Travancore High Court.

Having reached the heights of administrative fame, these men were frequently called upon to serve in legislative councils, commissions of inquiry, and in public and charity work under the aegis of the government. Rama Iyengar, for example,

was a nominated member of the Madras Legislative Council for twelve years; Seshia Sastri served in the same chamber in 1878-79; while Ranganada Sastri's tenure in the Madras legislature was cut short to seven months by his death. Madava Rao, who had repeatedly turned down offers of a seat in the Imperial Legislative Council, was chairman of the Malabar Land Tenure Commission, set up in 1885 to investigate into the causes of agrarian unrest in that district. Muthusamy Iyer, for example, presided over the Malabar Marriage Commission in 1891 and the Hindu Religious Endowments Committee in 1893. For such distinguished service, the administrative elite was granted honors which in the past had been reserved for ruling Princes and eminent European civilians. Madava Rao, Muthusamy Iyer, and Seshia Sastri received knighthoods; Rama Iyengar, Runga Charlu, and Raghunatha Rao were made Companions of the Order of the Star of India.

ATTITUDE TOWARDS SOCIAL CHANGE

It was inevitable that the administrative elite, because of its superior Western education and its wide experience of the conditions of its own society, should thrust itself forward as a new leadership group committed, however vaguely, to certain social and political objectives. Basically, it saw its social goal as one of trying to reconcile the ways of a tradition-ridden society with the dynamic and egalitarian values of its alien rulers. In attempting to make some essential adjustments in Hindu social behavior, the administrative elite was seeking not only to rid its society of some archaic usages but also to remove the obstacles standing in the way of India's regeneration.

Some of these adjustments would involve a radical break with tradition, but this elite group was quick to deny the charge that it was seeking to reorder Hindu society along Western lines.

Indeed, it always claimed that the changes it advocated had the sanction of ancient Hindu scriptures, an argument often employed to placate the conservative elements of Hindu society. However, despite invoking the authority of the Shastras and other Hindu religious texts, it could not disguise the fact that the changes urged aimed a blow at some cherished canons of upper caste Hindu social behavior. By rejecting infant marriage and enforced widowhood, the administrative elite seemed to undermine the style of life of the Brahmins and higher non-Brahmin castes, and even endanger the ritual supremacy of these caste groups. It is not surprising that this social program generated so much hostility in South India, not only from the ranks of the religious elite but also from the upper Hindu castes as a whole.

It is interesting to note that the social ideas of the administrative elite have their roots in its student days at the Madras High School. Swept away to some extent by its initial admiration for Western institutions, and no doubt influenced by the views of its European teachers, this elite group gave a radical twist to its prognostications on the evils afflicting the country at large. T. Madava Rao, in an essay written in 1845, attributed India's backwardness and cultural stagnation partly to the misrule of the "sceptred tyrants" of the past and partly to the tenacious hold of certain ancient institutions and rites. He went on to argue that the country's regeneration lay in the renunciation of these social evils and the gradual assimilation of the values and norms of the West. The importance of Western education as a means of achieving this end was stressed: the study of a Western language was regarded as "the key to the repositories of the literature and science of the western world" and the acquisition of this knowledge was believed to raise India to the level of Western prosperity and power.⁴⁹ This was the recurring theme in the writings of many of Madava Rao's contemporaries in the Madras High School.

While they were dazzled by the achievements of the West, they felt humiliated by the helplessness of their country, its economic plight, and its social and sectarian divisions.

Once their scholastic life ended, these Proficients showed little urgency in pursuing their social objectives. Indeed, their preoccupation with official duties and furthering their administrative careers seemed to have left them with little time for anything else. However, by the 1860s the administrative elite began to feel mounting pressure for some action on the social plane. Partly, this pressure came from its European patrons and sympathizers who became growingly critical of its continued inaction. Also, the example set by reformist groups in other parts of the country could not be ignored. Especially important was the Brahmo Samaj of Bengal. Seeking to spread its message to the other provinces, the Brahmo Samaj sent its secretary, Keshub Chandra Sen, on an extended tour of southern and western India in 1864. In a lecture at Madras, Sen exhorted educated Hindus to remove "the gigantic evil" of caste, promote female education, and to form associations to give direction to reformist activity.⁵⁰ This speech, according to a local paper, "created quite a sensation amongst a large portion of our Hindoo Community,"⁵¹ and barely three months later, two young law students, who had recently passed out of the Madras University, organized the Veda Samaj along the lines of the Brahmo Samaj of Bengal. A covenant was drafted, to be signed by all members of the Veda Samaj, pledging support for theism, female education, and widow remarriage, while disavowing idolatry, child marriage, and "all sectarian views and animosities."⁵²

Although the organizers of the Veda Samaj had clearly stolen a march on their elder and more influential counterparts in the administration, it was, however, soon apparent that their ideology was too radical to have any significant appeal among their countrymen. A frontal attack on Hinduism,

from its post-Vedic doctrines to many of its current social practices, did little to recommend the Veda Samaj either to the mass of conservative Hindus or to the small progressive element which wanted change along more realistic lines. However, the launching of the Veda Samaj did seem to have had the effect of stirring one member of the administrative elite, C. V. Ranganada Sastri, to initiate a concerted agitation against one of the glaring social evils of South India, that of infant marriage.

It was almost universal practice among Brahmins to marry their children in their teens, often before they had attained the age of ten, and to a lesser extent this practice was also prevalent among the Vellalars and Komatis. According to one contemporary description, infant marriage "consists in tying the Tally over the neck of a child which cannot speak, eat or drink, or sit well when the awful ceremony of marriage is going on, not to say anything about the solemn and binding obligations under which it is placed. If the child cries for milk or is terrified at the scene, the marriage is effected by placing a plantain in the hand. This is familiarly known among the Hindoos as a Plantain Marriage." The burden of reformist objection to this marriage was that it swelled the numbers of Hindu widows who were prohibited by strict caste injunctions from remarrying. The injustice of this practice, especially when it applied to child widows, as well as the many disabilities and privations to which they were subjected for the rest of their adult lives, struck a sympathetic chord among reformist-minded Hindus. Others argued that enforced widowhood had introduced "a flood of immorality" into Hindu society by compelling widows to seek illicit liaisons and, in the event of an illegitimate offspring, resort to infanticide.⁵³

Ranganada Sastri had utilized his knowledge of Sanskrit to delve into the sacred writings of the Hindus in an attempt to establish the validity of some of the social rites which had become an

essential part of Hindu life. In so far as infant marriage was concerned, he found that it was not only opposed to common sense but also "contrary to the sentiments and doctrines expressly promulgated in the sacred formula pronounced on the celebration of the marriage itself." In a letter to a local newspaper, Ranganada Sastri announced his intention of seeking the abolition of child marriage. He claimed to have enlisted the support of many "able Pundits," and gave formal notice of mooting the subject in the presence of the Sankaracharya, the Head Priest of Madras, with the help of Sanskrit scholar, C. Ananda Rama Sastri.⁵⁴ A pamphlet was produced for circulation among the Pundits and other interested parties.

The cause of infant marriage was championed by a Telugu scholar, G. Venkanna Sastri. He argued that the reformers had referred to "the wrong source of evidence in support of their cause" and, consequently, had arrived at "a most extraordinary [sic] illogical conclusion with respect to the meaning of the passages" they had cited.⁵⁵ He persuaded the Sankaracharya to defer decision on the issue until he produced a pamphlet. Two months elapsed before the pamphlet was published, but when the long-awaited confrontation took place in October 1865, it proved to be something of an anti-climax. Each party blamed the other for failing to settle the issue decisively: the reformers felt that their opponents had resorted to dilatory tactics, while the latter contended that the reformers had not abided by their undertaking to refer the dispute to a committee of learned men drawn from the various parts of South India.⁵⁶ This abortive encounter ended, at least temporarily, the agitation against infant marriage.

Ranganada Sastri must have sensed the strong feelings which this issue had engendered, especially within the Brahmin community, but he did not allow this to interfere with his other reformist schemes. One issue which had been attracting some interest was female education. Since the 1850s

female education had made some headway in South India, but reformers were concerned about the premature withdrawal of high caste girls from schools. This stemmed partly from early marriage and partly from parental objection to their daughters being taught by male teachers once they had attained maturity. Reformers had long recognized the weight of the latter objection, but it was only with the arrival of Mary Carpenter in Madras in November 1866 that a way was found to surmount this difficulty.

Miss Carpenter, whose acquaintance with Ram Mohan Roy had roused her "ardent interest in the regeneration of India," visited the country to mobilize support for a number of schemes, including female education. In Madras, she convened a meeting of local leaders in the house of E. B. Powell, then Director of Public Instruction, and persuaded them that a female normal school was "absolutely necessary" to prevent high caste girls leaving school without completing their education.

Ranganada Sastri and Rama Iyengar were among those who supported Miss Carpenter, and it was agreed that a public meeting would be called to memorialize the authorities to establish such an institution.⁵⁷

When the meeting took place in January 1867, there was a sharp division of views as to what ought to be the medium of instruction and who ought to be admitted into the school. The meeting ended without taking a decision.⁵⁸ Mary Carpenter, who was then in Calcutta, convened a fresh meeting on her return and secured support for a memorial to the Madras Government calling for the establishment of a female normal school. The authorities agreed provided that part of the maintenance costs were met from private sources. An appeal for public contributions generated little response, and the fate of the project hung in the balance until the Maharajah of Vizianagram offered to subscribe Rs 12,000 annually.⁵⁹ The Female Normal School was started in 1869, with admission restricted to girls

from the higher castes and classes.

Besides infant marriage and female education, the other issue which attracted attention was widow remarriage. Reformers in Madras, having failed in their campaign against infant marriage, recognized that something ought to be done in the way of relieving the plight of the child widows. Sanctioning remarriage of virgin widows seemed to suggest an effectual remedy, but little advance was made in this direction despite a desultory discussion of the issue in the press. Indeed, it was the reformers in the neighboring Indian States who demonstrated greater courage and earnestness in promoting widow remarriages. In 1867, a Mahratta Brahmin in Bangalore remarried his widowed daughter despite threats of excommunication.⁶⁰ Similarly, in 1873, Sesha Iyengar, a Sri-Vaishnava Brahmin Pleader in Nagercoil, Travancore, married off his widowed daughter according to Hindu rites. After the marriage, the entire family was outcasted, denied the services of priests, barbers, and washermen, barred from entering temples, and prevented from drawing water from wells.⁶¹ To withstand these social pressures, Sesha Iyengar announced the formation of a widow remarriage society in Nagercoil which would offer financial help and advice to those arranging widow remarriages.⁶²

Sesha Iyengar's efforts in remote Nagercoil must have been something of an embarrassment to fellow reformers in Madras. As the metropolis of South India, and boasting of many educated Hindus in positions of influence and wealth, Madras was expected to provide the lead in political as in social matters rather than following on the heels of the *mofussil* and Indian States. The reformers in Madras realized that a new initiative was overdue, and in April 1874 a meeting was convened to inaugurate the Madras Hindu Widow Marriage Association. Its aim was to encourage "the marriage of Hindoo widows to the extent of its means and opportunities and so far as may be compatible with the preservation of the hold on and their influence in

orthodox Hindoo society." Believing that success would depend on obtaining religious sanction, it was decided to publish relevant extracts from the *Shastras* which expressly approved of widow remarriage. Any idea of seeking inter-caste marriage or of overthrowing the caste system was vigorously disclaimed. Among the active sponsors of this association were Rama Iyengar and Muthusamy Iyer, both of whom were elected to the Managing Committee, while P. Chentsal Rao was made Secretary.⁶³ Despite its modest aims, the Madras Hindu Widow Marriage Association failed to rally any significant support, and little was heard of its activities in the ensuing years.

The collapse of this association reflected, according to some contemporary critics, the very timidity of the reformers. As reformist bodies languished for want of support, and as reformers almost everywhere seemed reluctant to run into any headlong conflict with their opponents, criticisms of the reformist movement became harsher and more vociferous. The founders of the Madras Hindu Widow Marriage Association, for example, were accused of being insincere, and their efforts were described as "a sham to please the European public."⁶⁴ Others charged the reformers with lacking the courage to practice what they boldly preached on the platform and in the press. A "Native Critic" claimed in 1878 that although the great majority of the Brahmins deplored infant marriage, that same majority would persecute anyone who departed from the practice. He contended that even Hindus who had risen to high administrative positions in Madras were as timid as their uneducated brethren, and would shrink away from challenging "popular opinion and prejudices." This was an obvious reference to Ranganada Sastri, Rama Iyengar, and Muthusamy Iyer, men of high ritual status and enjoying much influence in the administration, but who were found wanting in courage and dedication in pursuing their goals. The "Native Critic" concluded that unless Hindu reformers

displayed "moral courage and above all action" their endeavors would "evaporate into empty speculation."⁶⁵

Indeed, the crux of the matter was to find someone who had the courage of his convictions and who would be willing to sacrifice his comfort for conscience and humanity. Such a person was K. Viresalingam Pantalu, whose pioneering efforts in the Northern Circars represented the most significant breakthrough yet in the field of social reform in South India. Born into a Niyogi Brahmin family in Rajahmundry in 1848, he studied in the local high school and eventually became a Telugu Pundit in the Rajahmundry Arts College. From the outset, he set his mind firmly on the cause of social reform. His mastery of Telugu enabled him to wield his pen persuasively against wrongs and injustices of any kind, and this was especially evident in his writings in the *Vivekavandana*, a Telugu weekly he had started in 1874. Four years later, he and his close associates organized the Rajahmundry Social Reform Association to collect funds and disseminate information on social questions.

Although a number of different issues were discussed, it was the condition of the child widows which stirred their innermost sympathy. Viresalingam prepared a memorandum to demonstrate that there was no religious objection to the remarriage of virgin widows, and he widely circulated it in the Northern Circars. This soon touched off a fierce controversy in Rajahmundry, with the reformers clearly in a minority. Viresalingam was not dissuaded, and in December 1881 two widow marriages were performed in Rajahmundry according to Hindu rites. Although excommunication followed, the reformers rode the storm, and by June 1884 they had celebrated their tenth widow marriage in Rajahmundry.⁶⁶

With the excitement generated by events in Rajahmundry, reformers in Madras gradually began to shake themselves out of their apathy. Although a younger and more vocal element had appeared on the

scene, it was still the administrative elite which continued to lead the reformist agitation. Two of the prominent figures of the earlier years were, however, absent: Ranganada Sastri, who died in 1881, and Rama Iyengar, who assumed the Dewanship of Travancore a year earlier.

In their place came Rubgundai Raghunatha Rao, a member of a distinguished Mahratta Brahmin family whose ancestors had served the British for three generations. He had studied under Powell, was appointed Deputy Collector in 1859, and later seconded to Indore as Dewan in 1875. When he returned to Madras as Deputy Collector five years later, he plunged into the reformist movement with a zeal and devotion rarely found among his counterparts. His interest in the movement was stimulated by his study of the religious writings of the Hindus. The more deeply he delved into "Aryan religion and sociology," the more convinced he became of the Hindu departure from the simple and pristine quality of Vedic life. It was in the treatment of Hindu women that he noted the greatest departure from early Aryan practice. Although the Shastras, the divinely inspired writings of the Hindus, had placed women in a position of equality with men, Raghunatha Rao was appalled to see that most of their civil rights had been eroded away and they were forced into infant marriage and enforced widowhood, customs which did not have the sanction of the Shastras.⁶⁷ He attributed these changes to the centuries of decay and chaos following "the golden age" of the Vedic period, and the resulting degeneration of the intellectual quality of the pundits and priests. Some of the latter he held responsible for importing "sinister" textual changes in their commentaries of the Vedas which he believed were "prejudicial to the happiness of the people."⁶⁸ Raghunatha Rao believed that this orthodox elite, which held custom as more authoritative than the Shastras, to be the major obstacle to social reform in South India.

Raghunatha Rao was equally disenchanted with

the attitude of the Western-educated class. For many years, he had assumed that reforms would logically follow with the spread of Western education, but by the early 1880s he came to the contrary view that the new learning was an impediment rather than a help. He regarded the younger Western-educated class as atheists and iconoclasts, so enamored by the ways of the West that it despised its own religious and social heritage. It held in contempt the Shastras which it took for "a code of repealed rules . . . utterly unsuited to these days of refined civilization." With such zealots Raghunatha Rao had little sympathy as he felt that their radicalism was essentially destructive and threatened the basic cohesion of Hindu society. His hopes for constructive change were placed on that section of Hindu opinion which wanted the Shastras to be the sole determinant of Hindu social behavior.

Raghunatha Rao believed that this group was larger than the "orthodox section" or the radicals,⁶⁹ and it was its support he courted when he organized the Hindu Women's Remarriage Association in 1882, although he was not prepared to shut out the radicals entirely from this body.

The admission of the radicals meant an uneasy partnership of two groups which, though agreed on certain social reforms, derived their inspiration from widely divergent sources. The dominant faction was the group led by Raghunatha Rao, known as the "traditional school" of reformers whose source of inspiration was the Shastras. Other leaders of this group were Chentsal Rao and S. Subramania Iyer, a *vakil* in the Madras High Court who later became a judge. Unlike its younger opponents, who were called the "rationalist school," as they wanted reason and common sense to be the guidelines of reform, the traditional school called for "an inflexible conformity with the Shastras" in the pursuit of reformist goals.⁷⁰ At times, Raghunatha Rao went as far as to reject the term "reform" in preference to what he called "the revival of our old rules of conduct." This attitude

stemmed to some extent from reasons of expediency. He did not believe that change could be achieved by merely "proclaiming ourselves to be clever men and calling upon others to obey us." The success of any cause, Raghunatha Rao argued, depended on "preaching to the people that the practice is not only pernicious but is opposed to the Shastras."⁷¹ It was only by invoking the authority of the sacred Hindu texts that he felt that any progress could be achieved in social reform.

The most important positions within the Hindu Women's Remarriage Association were filled by reformers of the traditional school, with Raghunatha Rao elected President, and the aims and activities of the Association largely mirrored the thinking of the traditional school of reformers. The Association disapproved of infant marriage where the bride was below ten years of age. Its main aim, however, was to promote widow marriages. Marriage, according to the rules of the Association, was only "completed by sacrifices and by consummation," and widow marriage "with Vedic marital rites" was permissible "provided she is a virgin."⁷² The Association pledged "to advocate and encourage, celebrate and pay for, the marriage of girls who are or who may be widowed before the consummation of marriage with their husbands, and to receive them, their supporters and sympathisers into society."⁷³

During its early years of existence, the Hindu Women's Remarriage Association displayed commendable activity which was in marked contrast to its predecessors. In May 1883 the idea of seeking a modification of the Hindu Widow Remarriage Act of 1856 was mooted. The Association submitted to the Indian Government a Draft Bill, the aim of which was to annul the clause which imposed forfeiture of inheritance rights on widows who remarried. The reformers argued that this clause had encouraged many parents to keep their widowed daughters in a state of enforced widowhood.⁷⁴ At the same time, a propaganda campaign was launched to mobilize public support for widow marriages very much along the

lines of what Viresalingam had done in the Northern Circars. But there was one difference: the reformers in Madras offered monetary incentives to anyone who negotiated widow marriages or gave information of virgin widows seeking marriage.⁷⁵ In June 1883 the Association celebrated its first widow marriage with some eclat, culminating in a procession through Mylapore.⁷⁶ This stirred the ire of the religious heads who promptly excommunicated six reformers who had participated in a dinner given to the married couple. An attempt to settle the differences amicably at a conference in September 1884 failed, owing to the insistence of the Head Priest of Triplicane to be the sole judge of the discussion.⁷⁷

Among the declared objectives of the Hindu Women's Remarriage Association was the forging of closer links between reformers in different parts of South India. In the past little premium was placed on this, but the example set by political leaders must have gone a long way to convince social reformers that cooperation was an essential factor in furthering their aims. The opportunity to make a modest start came in December 1884, when a political conference was held in Madras. The Hindu Women's Remarriage Association sent out invitations to *mofussil* leaders welcoming them to a conference to discuss ways of promoting widow marriage. When the Conference met on 31 December, participation, for reasons not apparent, was restricted to graduates, while other reformers like Raghunatha Rao, Chentsal Rao, and Viresalingam were invited as guests. Another unexpected move was to broaden the scope of the Conference to include such subjects as female education and infant marriage. Three main resolutions were passed: every graduate should actively promote female education; infant marriage should be discouraged; and graduates should support widow remarriage and signify this in writing. The last resolution was heatedly debated and was only carried after an attempt to defer it for future consideration.⁷⁸ A similar

Conference was held in Madras in December 1885, and on this occasion there was no restriction on those wishing to attend.⁷⁹

Conferences of this kind had come to stay, and there were many reformers in South India who even began to feel that the scope of such meetings should be broadened to embrace other regions of India as well. Among the advocates of this idea was Raghunatha Rao, who was doubtless influenced by the success of the politicians in organizing the Indian National Congress. For some time he and his supporters tried to get social issues discussed at the Congress, but, having failed to do so, they decided to go ahead on their own. The result was the convening of the National Social Conference in Madras in December 1887. Like the Congress, this Conference soon established provincial committees in the various parts of India. In Madras, the Hindu Committee of the National Social Conference was formed in December 1888, with Madava Rao as President and Raghunatha Rao as Secretary.⁸⁰ Although this Committee became the focus of reformist activity in Madras, the Hindu Women's Remarriage Association continued to fulfill its limited role of promoting widow marriages.

THE APPROACH TO POLITICS

What emerges clearly in studying the involvement of the administrative elite in the public movements is the obvious contrast between its activist role in the field of social reform and its deep reluctance to promote change in the country's political institutions. In social reform, as already noticed, the administrative elite had displayed zeal in forming associations, convening conferences, and attacking certain established usages and customs. Here, this group was to a considerable extent keeping pace with the thinking of the more numerous, younger, Western-educated class that was graduating from high schools and colleges

in South India after the Mutiny. A measure of its success in winning the loyalty of the younger element was the readiness of the latter to entrust leadership of the reformist movement to such elders as Raghunatha Rao, Madava Rao, and Chentsal Rao. However, in the field of politics, the reverse seemed to have been the case. Here, the administrative elite displayed a marked degree of inaction, sometimes even hostility. By its failure to comprehend the importance of the political developments of the 1880s, it forfeited whatever chances it had of influencing the course of events, if not providing constructive leadership. Indeed, this decade was to witness a running political conflict between the elder, status conscious administrative elite and the younger, politically conscious professional elite.*

In trying to explain the attitude of the administrative elite towards politics in general and the professional elite in particular, it is important to bear in mind that its members had spent the better part of their lives in public service in the course of which they had been entrusted with the responsibilities of high office and rewarded with honors and titles by their British masters. If anything, this was an experience which had convinced them that the most effective way of promoting the country's welfare was by good government management and pragmatic policies rather than innovative legislation and structural changes in an administration based on alien doctrines. Essentially, the administrative elite saw the ends of government as basically custodial rather than creative, with emphasis on political stability rather than trying to keep pace with the newfangled Western concepts of individual liberty, parliamentary democracy, and social justice. In stressing political stability, these elder administrators

* The origins of this elite group are discussed in the next Chapter.

wanted the Western-educated class to play a kind of mediative role between the rulers and the ruled, removing possible misunderstandings and helping the former to formulate the right policies on which depended the continued progress of the country. It was this mediative role which the administrative elite chose to play, both during the period of its active public service and during its years in retirement.*

To play this role effectively, the administrators made conscious efforts to establish their credentials with the rulers. Their long and devoted service to the Raj was helpful for a start but by itself was quite inadequate. It was equally important to affirm periodically their unflinching loyalty to the British Empire; this helped counter the rising antigovernment clamor of the professional elite, which had led to official doubts about the loyalty of the educated class.⁸¹ Muthusamy Iyer, for example, exhorted the graduates of the Madras University in these words: "Let your thought and action be always guided by a profound feeling of loyalty to our gracious Sovereign and to the British nation to whom you owe a debt of gratitude which you can never adequately repay." He asserted that in India the two branches of "the Aryan race" had come together "under God's Providence," and he expressed confidence in Britain's ability to discharge its great mission in India, "the grandest of all spectacles and the noblest of all triumphs."⁸² At the same time, the virtues of British rule were constantly reiterated. Said Madava Rao in 1887:

* Seshia Sastri said in 1882: ". . . the educated natives, whether engaged in Government service or in other walks of life must, for a long time to come, continue to be interpreters between their own countrymen and the rulers." Cited in Kamesvara Aiyar, *Sastri*, pp. 255-56.

The truth must be frankly and gratefully admitted that the British Government of India is incomparably the best Government we have ever had.

It is the strongest and the most righteous and the best suited to India's diverse populations and diverse interests.

It is the most capable of self-maintenance, of self-renovation and self-adjustment, in reference to the progressive advancement of the subject-race.⁸³

Seshia Sastri was no less generous in his praise of what the British Raj had done in recognizing Indian talent since the Mutiny. He wrote in 1882:

Nor is it possible for me to forget the fact that twenty-five years ago there was not a single native exercising Revenue and Magisterial functions higher than those of Tahsildar or Head of Police. What is the case now? All these functions excepting the highest have been transferred to Native Deputy Collectors and Magistrates. Twenty-five years ago no native was trusted with the charge of a Treasury and now there is none but a native in charge of all Treasuries all over India.

Again twenty-five years ago in the Judicial Department even the Principal Sudder Amins had but a limited jurisdiction. Now there is hardly a District Judge exercising original jurisdiction, the whole work of original jurisdiction has passed to a native agency.⁸⁴

At the same time, attempts were made to win the goodwill of the rulers by cultivating closer social ties with senior European officials. Rama Iyengar, for example, endeavored "to keep his house in European style, to teach English to the female members of his family and to invite European gentlemen to parties at his residence."⁸⁵

Perhaps the most significant attempt which the

administrative elite made at developing cordial ties between Europeans and Indians was the foundation of the Cosmopolitan Club in October 1873. Its aim was to give "greater facilities for personal intercourse between Indian and European Gentlemen in Madras," and to provide for "introducing European visitors to Madras to the principal residents and thereby affording some insight into Indian Society." Lectures and discussions were to be held from time to time, and a library and recreational facilities provided. All leading officials in South India, from members of the Governor's Executive Council to Deputy Collectors and *Tahsildars*, were invited to join, and membership during the first year jumped from 41 to 177. Among those who took a prominent part in the formation of this club were Rama Iyengar, Raghunatha Rao, and Muthusamy Iyer, the last named having the distinction of becoming the first Indian President.⁸⁶ M. G. Ranade, who had visited the Cosmopolitan Club no less than five times, said in 1887 that "gentlemen of all shades of opinion do assemble regularly every evening for discussing the general topics of the day."⁸⁷ In the absence of other similar institutions, the Cosmopolitan Club long continued to fulfill the role of providing the means for informal exchange of views between groups of diverse ethnic and social origins.

Such social associations, coupled with its pro-British sympathies, naturally precluded the administrative elite from fully participating in the political movements unleashed by the professional elite during the 1880s. The idea of agitating for reforms, which in its eyes amounted to nothing more than confronting the government with unrealistic demands, was repugnant to a group which had so long employed different tactics to achieve its ends. Equally distasteful were the efforts of the professional elite to organize itself into political camps, as a kind of permanent opposition to the government. Such associations, including the Indian National Congress, appeared to divide

the rulers from the ruled whereas the administrative elite would have preferred to bring the two parties together. Moreover, the idea of holding public meetings, of rubbing shoulders with the common folk and seeking their support, did not appeal to the genteel and aristocratic ways of the administrators. But underlying all these was the latent hostility towards the professional elite, which, though lacking in wealth or prestige, was nevertheless asserting its dominance over political movements and claiming to speak for the people as a whole. Not surprisingly, the administrative elite regarded its younger rivals as "upstarts," or in the words of Seshia Sastri "penniless patriots,"⁸⁸ whose extravagant rhetoric and radical posturing betrayed their youthfulness, inexperience in public affairs, and an impatient idealism. To cast their fortunes with this group appeared to many elder administrators to be an act of folly, subversive of the long-term interests of the country and even prejudicial to the stability of the Empire.

However, one prominent member of the administrative elite was broadly in sympathy with the activities of the youthful politicians. He was Raghunatha Rao, who, in his efforts to mobilize support for social reform, came to establish useful friendships with some prominent members of the professional elite. He had a reputation, both within the public service and outside, for candor and plain speaking, which had often "brought him into collision with the [European] officials." As W. S. Blunt recorded in his diary in 1883, Raghunatha Rao was not easily overawed by his European superiors as he knew their weaknesses and was affluent enough to look after himself if something went amiss.⁸⁹ As a student of the Madras High School, he had closely followed the activities of the Madras Native Association. In later years he often publicly acknowledged his admiration for the political work of Lakshmanarasu Chetty.

As an official, he never hesitated to express his views on questions he deemed important. In

1860, for instance, he addressed a letter to Trevelyan in which he upheld the rights of the *mir-asdars* to the soil, a stand contrary to that held by senior Madras officials.⁹⁰ When he was Dewan of Indore, at the height of the famine then sweeping Central and South India, he penned a memorandum in which he argued that the high government assessment had impoverished the peasants and discouraged agricultural production.⁹¹ In 1880 he was elected President of the Triplicane Literary Society, which, during the next few years, became the leading critic of the policies of the Madras authorities. There is little doubt that Raghunatha Rao, despite his official status, was increasingly identifying himself with the aspirations, if not the activities, of the professional elite, perhaps from his dissatisfaction with the growing European disregard for "the feelings and opinions of the [Indian] people." He told Blunt in 1883 that this alienation was a recent occurrence, which was very unlike the old times when Indians and Europeans were "on a footing of something like equality."⁹² Not surprisingly, when the Congress first met in Bombay in 1885, Raghunatha Rao was among the few officials who attended it as *amici curiae*.^{*} In later years, his ardor for the Congress diminished somewhat when it adamantly refused to consider social questions.

Raghunatha Rao's involvement in political movements did not remove the underlying antagonism between these two elite groups which came to the surface when the elder leaders, including Madava Rao, Muthusamy Iyer, and Raghunatha Rao, gave a farewell reception in honor of the departing Member of the Governor's Executive Council, D. F. Carmichael, in December 1883. This reception touched off a heated controversy with the professional elite which opposed the idea of "a public

* In February 1888, at a speech in Indore, Raghunatha Rao even claimed to be the originator of the Congress. See *Hindu*, 9 March 1888.

reception" on the grounds that Carmichael had not championed Indian interests. The sponsors of the reception were urged to abandon the "odious movement" or run the risk of "a direct and open collision" with their opponents.⁹³ When the warning was ignored, the professional elite proposed to test popular reactions to the reception. A committee was formed which reported that reaction to honoring Carmichael was adverse. Convinced that popular opinion was behind it, this elite group convened a public meeting which resolved that Carmichael's services "have not been such as to entitle him to any special recognition."⁹⁴

Whatever ill feeling this incident had caused, and however deeply the administrative elite distrusted its more aggressive rivals, it was not always easy for the former to maintain an attitude of noninvolvement in political issues. On the one hand, there was little doubt that popular opinion, as far as it was capable of articulation, was sympathetic to the causes which animated the activities of the professional elite. Issues like local self-government, Ilbert Bill, higher education, and greater Indian participation in the administration, were supported by public opinion. Nor were the elder leaders always opposed to these demands: indeed, they had a sneaking sympathy for many of these demands and some gave public expression to their views. Then again, there were occasions when the administrative elite had to discard its posture of aloofness from political demonstrations. One occasion was the visit of Lord Ripon to Madras in January and February 1884. The professional elite wanted a popular reception, ostensibly to honor the Viceroy, but, in reality, to demonstrate its support for the policies of Ripon which had been strongly criticized in the Anglo-Indian press. The elder leaders were aware of the political nature of the celebrations, but they could hardly remain aloof without seeming to snub a popular Viceroy. Madava Rao led the way, first by presiding over a public meeting to decide

what ought to be done, and then by heading the welcoming party to receive Ripon on behalf of the Indian community in Madras.⁹⁵

There is no doubt that from this point onwards, Madava Rao, for one, was being gradually drawn into the vortex of regional and national politics. His family, like that of Raghunatha Rao, had in the past produced many distinguished administrators, and he had carried on this tradition by becoming Dewan of three different Indian States, where he had governed in the paternalistic tradition of the British Raj. When he retired in 1882, he settled in Madras to a life of comfort and quietude. But his solemn resolution to live "in placid retirement"⁹⁶ was shattered by calls from the government to serve in various committees and by urgings from the professional elite to take a more prominent part in political questions of the day. For some time Madava Rao resisted the wooing of the younger politicians whom he regarded as harsh critics of the government and considered "too theoretical" in their remedies, deficiencies which he attributed to their lack of the "sobering experience in the actual management of [public] affairs." He constantly exhorted the professional elite that to be useful guides it must "not too much outrun the multitude," but lead it "from step to step."⁹⁷ At the same time, he wanted this class to divert its energies to nonpolitical issues as well, like social reform, agriculture, and industry. When this evoked little response from "the fiery patriots," Madava Rao wrote in despair in 1885: "But I am afraid their goal is a Parliament of B.A.'s, Native Viceroys, Native Governors, Native Lieut.-Governors, Native Chief Commissioners."⁹⁸

Despite these inner reservations about the professional elite, the events of the next few years drove Madava Rao into the camp of the youthful politicians. The real moment of decision for him came in 1887, when the third Congress met in Madras. There was considerable enthusiasm in the southern metropolis, and this must have infected

Madava Rao. Hence, when the Chairmanship of the Congress Reception Committee was offered to him, Madava Rao, according to a biographer who knew him intimately then, had "a regular struggle in his mind" whether to accept it or "cut himself off from the youthful politicians of New India."⁹⁹ Eventually he accepted the offer, played his part in the arrangements for holding the Congress, and in his speech of welcome to the Congress delegates said that "such a gathering must appear the soundest triumph of British administration, and the crown of glory to the great British nation."¹⁰⁰

With his reputation as "the Nestor of Indian Statesmen," Madava Rao's accession to the Congress was "universally acknowledged to be an event of the greatest possible importance, and one which spoke much for the reality and weight of the movement."¹⁰¹ If the Congress leadership was delighted, Madava Rao's erstwhile friends were surprised, and in some circles it was even said that he was guilty of political opportunism. There might be some grain of truth in this charge, although a close examination of Madava Rao's public utterances since 1882 leads one to the conclusion that he had always sought some kind of an accommodation.

Nevertheless, it was an accommodation on his own terms, as his subsequent activities clearly show. He became a member of the Madras Standing Congress Committee but he was not prepared to be tied down by the fetters of party control or direction. In his effusive writings in a local newspaper under the *non de plume* "A Native Observer," Madava Rao freely ventilated his opinions on a wide range of subjects, some of which were critical of the Congress. In November 1889, for example, he warned his Congress friends against imitating the political experiments in Europe, which he felt might disturb the tranquility of India. Rather, he wanted the country's welfare to be entrusted to the British bureaucracy, "a large, practical and highly-trained body profoundly interested in the continuance of British rule in India as a great blessing

to its vast population."¹⁰² Such gratuitous advice, given in an organ generally hostile to the Congress, caused resentment among the professional elite and, in a sense, foreshadowed the open rupture which came in 1890 over the question of the introduction of the elective principle in India.

In February 1890 the British Government introduced a Bill in Parliament to reform the Indian legislatures. Called the Cross Bill, its controversial clause was the nonrecognition of the principle of election in the choice of members to these bodies. Congress leaders in Madras reacted with anger and dismay and adopted a posture of defiance so long as the principle of election was not conceded. Madava Rao, however, took a different view. He argued that the concessions embodied in the Bill were reasonable and the Congress should accept the measure "with gratitude." He wrote: "I do not much care about the non-concession of popular election, because careful observation and experience convince me that popular election at present would have ensured the failure of extended Councils, whereas nomination would probably be their success."¹⁰³ These utterances provoked a political storm in Madras, with Madava Rao accused of political inconsistency and naivete, while some charged him with having "betrayed his party."¹⁰⁴

Madava Rao reacted angrily to these charges and in retaliation denounced both the Congress program and its supporters. He deprecated the demand for the separation of revenue and judicial functions, contending that it was a "mischievous" proposal aimed to benefit the lawyers while imposing "an intolerable burden on the simple country population."¹⁰⁵ As for elected legislatures, Madava Rao charged that this was an attempt on the part of the professional elite to exclude from these bodies "all men of property and position as ignorant and useless." He warned the British rulers not to yield to the "impetuous and iconoclastic ambition of an imperfectly educated and impoverished class." He felt that "men of property and position and of

common sense in relation to human affairs are really more eligible for the work of legislation," and could be relied upon to apply "the brake to hasty, excessive, or mischievous legislation."¹⁰⁶ In April 1890 Madava Mao resigned from the Madras Standing Congress Committee.

Madava Rao's break with the Congress symbolized the fact that the cleavage between the two elite groups remained as wide as ever. Differences in age and temperament, attainment and wealth, had invested these groups with divergent attitudes and ideologies which no amount of goodwill by either party could bridge. Madava Rao's attempt to reach a kind of accommodation with the professional elite demonstrated that both sides were not totally averse to reaching compromise. But, in the long run, the compromise proved to be tenuous, partly because the mood of the times called for political militancy and partly because the credentials of one group were suspect because of its long and intimate association with the British Raj. Moreover, the professional elite was not prepared to be led by the apron strings of its elders, however distinguished and able they might be, as it offended its sense of dignity and pride. Indeed, a true insight into the relations of these two groups can only be gained by examining more closely the origins of the professional elite.

3. The Origins of the Professional Elite

It was the controversy over the reception for Carmichael in 1883 which highlighted, rather dramatically, the emergence of the professional elite on the political scene in South India. The spectacle of a minor issue assuming the character of a major political controversy bemused many contemporary observers, but, in retrospect, the incident marked the first real confrontation between two groups aspiring for leadership within the Indian community in Madras. In the normal course of things the action of the administrative elite in holding a farewell reception for an English official would have evoked little comment. But, coming as it did at the height of the unpopularity of the Madras Government, aggravated no doubt by the passions aroused by the European agitation against the Ilbert Bill, the celebration to honor publicly an official whose reputation had been tarnished by these controversies* appeared in the professional elite's eyes to be obtrusively sycophantic, if not wounding to the self-respect of an embattled subject community.

In taking issue over the reception, the

* The political controversies which convulsed South India during the early 1880s are discussed in Chapter 4.

professional elite went to some lengths to emphasize the fact that issues of public importance ought to be decided in accordance with public opinion as expressed through the press, platform, and voluntary associations. Doubtless, it was trying to lay the ground rules for a new style of political agitation where the stress would be on organizational unity and ideological purity. With such sentiments, however, the administrative elite had little sympathy, but this did not deter the younger elite group from rigorously pursuing its ideals to their logical conclusion. The formation of the Madras Mahajana Sabha in May 1884 was the first significant attempt on the part of the professional elite at attaining organizational unity by affiliating the numerous political bodies which had sprung up in different parts of South India, while the decision to hold a conference of these associations a few months later represented the first tangible effort at reaching a political consensus on the important issues of the day.

EXPANSION OF COLLEGIATE EDUCATION

The origins of the professional elite can be largely traced to the rapid expansion of collegiate education in South India during the second half of the nineteenth century. Unlike the 1840s, when bitter religious controversies restricted the educational endeavors of the government to the maintenance of the Madras High School, the succeeding decade saw the gradual resolution of points of conflict and the formulation of guidelines of policy which were largely responsible for the significant educational advance made over the next generation.

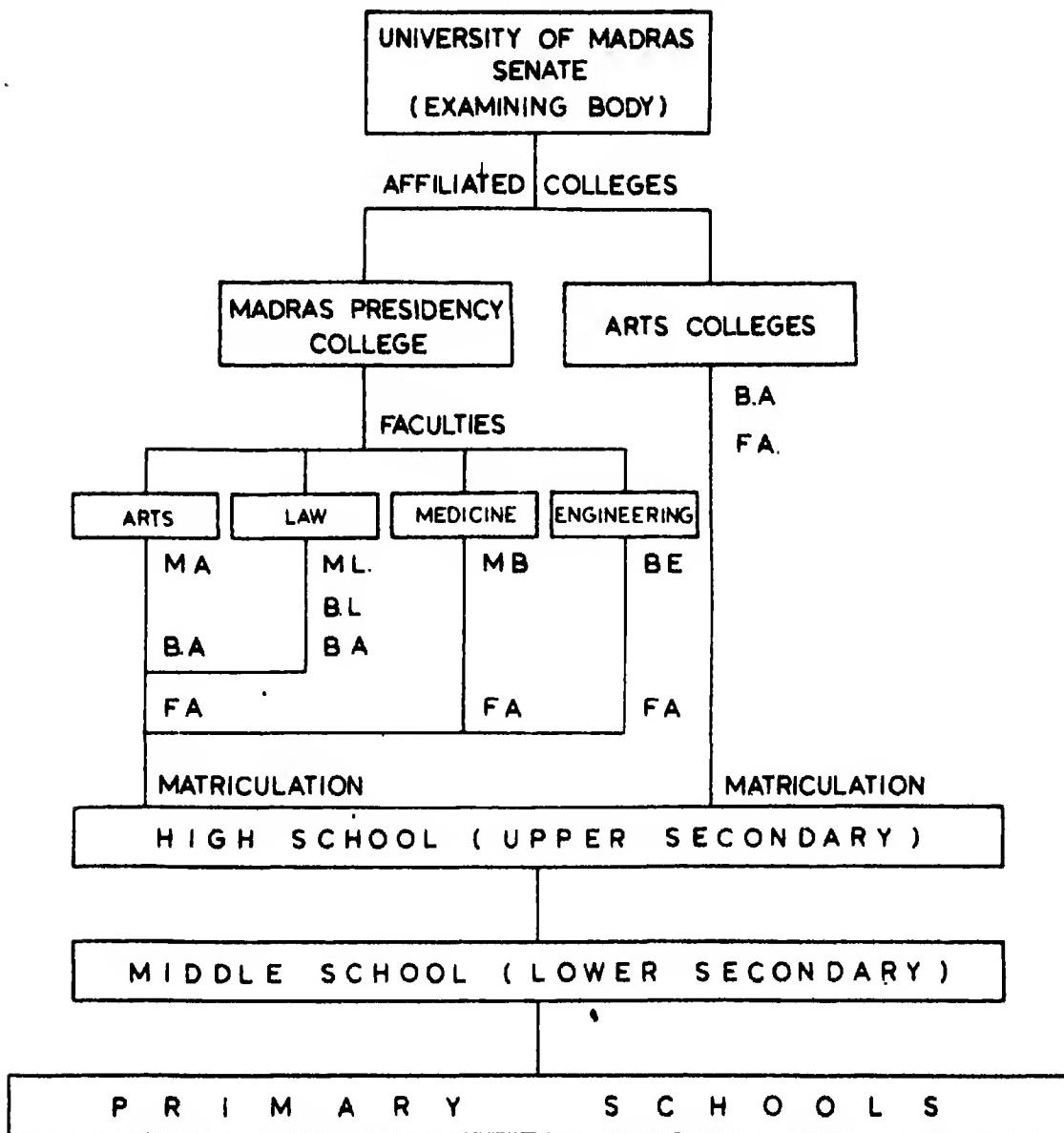
The Wood despatch of 1854 provided for the formation of the Department of Public Instruction in Madras, gave sanction to the liberal use of the grants-in-aid system to stimulate private enterprise in education, envisaged the establishment of universities in the three presidency capitals of

India, and approved the institution of examinations to test the fitness of candidates for public service. In 1858 the Madras authorities finalized arrangements for holding competitive tests for those seeking entry into all levels of government service. In the same year the issuing of the Queen's Proclamation reaffirmed the official policy of religious neutrality. Henceforth, missionary agitation for Bible lessons in government schools subsided, while Hindu fears about the pro-missionary bias of British officials also gradually disappeared.¹ Western education, reorganized on a more efficient basis, removed from the realm of controversy, and given its due rewards, was in a position to assert its hold over South India.

The diagram in Chart 1 indicates the broad educational structure that prevailed in South India during the second half of the nineteenth century. The base of the educational pyramid was formed by the vast network of primary schools scattered through the length and breadth of the presidency, embracing not only the towns but also most of the villages. Instruction at this level was in the language of the region, with English taught to a limited extent whenever there was a demand for it. Pupils learned reading, writing, and arithmetic, and, in most cases, this was all the formal education they would get. Eventually, only about one in ten managed to reach the secondary level. Several factors accounted for this high dropout rate. Besides having to cope with the difficulties of passing examinations, paying fees, and even learning their family craft, pupils in the rural areas had to contend with the fact that the secondary schools were almost always located in the towns and cities. It was beyond the means of most rural families to educate their children in these urban based institutions.

Secondary education began at the middle schools and ended in the high schools, which prepared students for matriculation. Instruction here was increasingly in English, while pupils were given

STRUCTURE OF EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM



F.A. FIRST ARTS
 B.A. BACHELOR OF ARTS
 B.L. BACHELOR OF LAW
 B.E. BACHELOR OF ENGINEERING

M.A. MASTER OF ARTS
 M.L. MASTER OF LAW
 M.B. BACHELOR OF MEDICINE

limited opportunities to pursue technical and scientific studies. As McCully rightly points out, it was these secondary schools which "constituted the basis of the English educational pyramid which was crowned by the universities."² Increasingly, these institutions saw themselves as feeders to the colleges, concerned with preparing students to clear the matriculation hurdle and secure a place in a college.

The colleges of South India, located in the larger urban centers, were essentially teaching institutions affiliated to the University of Madras. Except for the Madras Presidency College, all others were Arts colleges offering instruction in the liberal arts or science subjects up to First Arts (F.A.) or Bachelor of Arts degree (B.A.). In the Madras Presidency College, however, degree courses were also available in law, medicine and engineering, as well as facilities for postgraduate training in these fields. Therefore, this college earned the reputation of being the premier institution in South India, attracting the best teachers and students alike in the presidency.

The functions of examining and awarding degrees were entrusted to the University of Madras, set up in 1857. Modelled upon the University of London, this institution, through its Senate, ensured that there was uniformity in the curriculum, teaching methods, and academic standards of its various affiliated colleges.³ Indeed, situated as it was at the apex of the educational pyramid, the University of Madras wielded a decisive influence in shaping educational development in South India.

The following table shows the progress of higher education in South India during the decades immediately after the setting up of the University of Madras:

Table 3.1
Progress of Higher Education in South India 1857-1896

Period	Matric. Passes	First Arts	B.A.	Law	Engi- neering	Medi- cine	Total
1857-66	937	149	62	16	5	1	1,170
1867-76	4,968	1,371	401	88	9	9	6,846
1877-86	12,880	2,983	1,214	161	31	58	17,327
1887-96	15,526	7,257	2,917	434	34	157	26,325
Total	34,311	11,760	4,594	699	79	225	51,668

Source: *Madras University Calendar*, for relevant years (1857-1896).

The first decade of university education in South India was one of slow growth, at least in comparison to Bengal where five times as many students matriculated and four times as many secured the B.A. degree.⁴ The small number in South India can be attributed partly to the narrow base on which Western education rested in 1857 and partly to the attraction of the public service to students leaving schools. Particularly significant was the institution of the General Test in 1858 which siphoned off into the Uncovenanted Service many potential college students.⁵

However, these factors did not seem to have exercised the same influence during the years 1867-78 when collegiate education achieved a rapid growth rate. Passes in matriculation quintupled, while the increase in the numbers getting degrees was even higher..

The growth rate over the next decade, though not of the same magnitude, saw the momentum nevertheless maintained. South India caught up with Bengal (the latter produced 12,363 matriculates in this period as compared to 12,880 by South India), and official optimism that higher education was "developing at a rate far beyond the expectations of the most hopeful well-wishers of educational progress in India" was fully justified.⁶

During the decade 1887-96 the pace of expansion, at least in the Arts, eased off somewhat.

With the new emphasis on commercial and scientific education, and the narrowing of employment opportunities in the public service, demand for literary degrees began to recede gradually.

This sharp growth in the output of graduates was matched by the corresponding proliferation of colleges in South India. In 1858, when the first graduates passed out of the Madras University, the Presidency was served by a single college, the Presidency College. By 1871, however, eleven new colleges had sprung up in different centers of South India giving courses up to the First Arts (F.A.) or B.A. degree. In many instances it was merely a question of raising existing high schools to the status of colleges as in the case of Kumbacconam, Calicut, Bellary, and Mangalore.⁷

During the decade 1872-81, the number of colleges doubled to twenty-five, largely as a consequence of the official policy of decentralizing higher education by establishing institutions in the less accessible parts of the region. In 1885-86 only eight of the twenty-two districts of the Madras Presidency were without a college of their own, but, of these, seven were situated close to Madras or had too easy rail connections with the metropolis to warrant a college of their own.⁸ As McCully observes, South India during the eighties "offered greater provision for collegiate instruction than did Bengal despite the earlier lead of the latter Presidency in the field of higher education."⁹

A feature of higher education in South India was its uneven spread among the various linguistic groups inhabiting the Presidency. Superior educational facilities and a more efficient system of communications permitted the Tamils to establish an early lead in the race for collegiate education. In 1866, for example, about 75 per cent of the students in the Presidency College, the premier institution in South India, came from the Tamil-speaking areas.¹⁰ The situation was unchanged during the early seventies when the Tamil districts of

Madras and Tanjore dominated higher education. Possessing half the total colleges in South India, and all but one of the first-grade colleges instructing up to B.A. standard, Madras and Tanjore, by their easy accessibility to the Tamil districts, provided an enormous advantage to the Tamils seeking higher education.

By contrast, the Malayalam-speaking district of Malabar failed to make any progress in collegiate education until a decade after the foundation of the Madras University. Cut off from the metropolis by the high peaks of the Western Ghats, and without the benefit of rail or road links, Malayali youths were long deterred from migrating eastwards for their collegiate instruction.

Equally isolated were the northern Telugu districts. Especially affected was the Northern Circars. "This province," observed the Director of Public Instruction in 1876, "with a population twice as great as that of Scotland and an area one-fourth greater, has yet derived no benefit from the introduction of the railway into the Presidency, and although the establishment of coasting steamers has rendered these districts less inaccessible than they used to be to Europeans, the strong prejudices which many Hindus and most Brahmans have against sea-voyages have not been overcome, and very few students come down and prosecute their studies at Madras." Indeed, after two decades of higher education, the Northern Circars could hardly boast of half a dozen graduates.¹¹

It was the recognition of these inter-regional disparities which precipitated the decision by the government to decentralize higher education in South India. Conscious of the impetus which colleges had to higher learning in their immediate environs, the Director of Public Instruction advocated in 1876 the establishment of colleges in every district of the Presidency. The first fruit of this new policy was the decision a year later to elevate the Rajahmundry College to the status of a first-grade institution. Within a decade it became

"a nucleus for the high education over a large tract of country," drawing its students principally from the surrounding Telugu districts.¹² At the same time second-grade colleges, training students for the F.A. examination, sprang up in rapid succession in other Telugu centers, namely Vizianagram (1877), Vizagapatam (1878), Cocanada (1884), and Guntur (1884). The needs of the Malayali-speaking areas were also met with. In Malabar, Calicut became the center of higher learning with the establishment of two second-grade colleges in 1868 and 1879, while a third was started in Palghat in 1888. Facilities for collegiate instruction were also provided in Travancore, where a first-grade college existed in Trevandram since 1869 and a second-grade college in Ernakulam since 1877.

No accurate statistical compilation has been made of the advance registered in higher education by the different linguistic groups of the Presidency during the nineteenth century. Rough estimates, however, seem to confirm the popular view that Tamils never surrendered the early lead they had established. Between 1858 and 1894 a total of 1900 Tamils graduated with the B.A. degree from Madras University, a figure which exceeded the combined total of all the other linguistic groups of South India. The Malayalis came next with 500 graduates, though numerically they constituted a third of the Tamil population. The Telugus, numerically equal to the Tamils, could only boast of 450 graduates, while the Kanarese, equal in population to the Malayalis, accounted for 300 graduates.¹³

In an age when political consciousness stirred mainly the Western-educated class, Tamil preponderance in higher education led to their domination of the political movements in the Presidency. To an equal extent, the Tamils also dominated the public service, and this was nowhere more apparent than in the Indian States of Cochin, Travancore, and Mysore. It was a situation which gave rise to anti-Tamil sentiments in these areas from the 1880s onwards, finding expression in the cry "Mysore for

"Mysoreans" and "Travancore for Travancoreans."

Equally significant in political terms were the varying responses of the different communal groups to collegiate education. The table below gives the communal composition of the graduates on the rolls of Madras University in 1894:

Table 3.2
Composition of Graduates

Communal Group	No. of Graduates	Percentage of Total Graduates	Percentage of Total Population in 1891
Brahmins	2,393	68.8	3.1
Non-Brahmin Hindus	660	19.0	86.6
Indian Christians	287	8.2	2.3
Europeans & Eurasians	115	3.3	0.1
Muslims	26	0.7	6.3
Others	2	0	1.6
Total	3,483	100	100

Source: *University of Madras. Calendar for 1893-94*, 1, pp. 405-19; *Madras Census, XIII (1891)*: 65, 259.

The Brahmin preponderance was quite overwhelming. The domination of this caste was apparent at every level of higher education in South India, whether literary, scientific, or professional, and it was consistently sustained throughout the nineteenth century. But it should be stressed that not all Brahmin subcastes accepted Western learning. In Malabar, the Namburdiri group held aloof, scorning the attractions of secular pursuits and maintaining pride in its claim to be "the truest Aryan in Southern India."¹⁴ In the Northern Circars, the Vydiki Brahmins adopted a similar stance and stoutly resisted any encroachments into their traditional sacerdotal status. However, by and large, the Brahmins flocked to the colleges to take advantage of the new range of employment opportunities afforded to those with superior Western education.

The pace was initially set by the Mahratta Brahmins, at the time when the Madras High School was started, and their example stimulated two other

important Brahmin groups in Tamilnadu, the Smarthas and Sri-Vaishnavas, to apply themselves to the new learning with even greater zeal. These two groups had been traditionally associated with the higher Sanskrit culture, and the fact that they together formed a relatively affluent landholding class, especially in Tanjore, enabled them to surmount the financial burdens of collegiate instruction more easily than any other caste group. Equally important was the founding of a college in Kumbaconam, the stronghold of the Brahmins of the region and the center of Sanskrit culture in Tamilnadu for many centuries. This college "long had the monopoly of all the best Native teaching talent in the presidency," which was entirely Brahmin, while 90 per cent of its students were also Brahmins.¹⁵ According to one calculation, no less than 144 out of 599 Arts graduates of the Madras University between 1858 and 1877 were natives of Tanjore¹⁶ and they were principally Sri-Vaishnava or Smartha Brahmins.

After the 1870s Niyogi Brahmins began to enter the mainstream of higher education in the Northern Circars, aided no doubt by the starting of a first-grade college in Rajahmundry, while in Malabar the Pattar Brahmins showed a similar devotion to Western education and came to occupy influential positions in the administration and the professions.

In comparison to the Brahmins, the achievements of the other groups pale into relative insignificance. To an extent, the Indian Christians matched the Brahmins in the race for higher education. Though forming only 2 per cent of the total population, they accounted for over 8 per cent of the total graduates of Madras University. Their performance was all the more remarkable as they started from humble economic backgrounds and had to contend with social prejudices of the communities from which they had broken away. However, under the fostering care of the Christian missions, and their own readiness to adapt themselves to the changes brought about by British rule, the Indian

Christians successfully overcame their difficulties and won general acceptance as a progressive community. Christian women were the most literate in South India, and Christian men ranked second only to the Brahmins in their performance in collegiate education relative to their proportion of the population.¹⁷

Trailing far behind the Brahmins and Indian Christians were the non-Brahmin Hindus. Although the latter constituted over four-fifths of the population of the Presidency, their proportion of the total graduates was only one-fifth. Whatever the popular myths about Hindu response to Western education, there is nothing to obscure the fact that during the nineteenth century substantial sections of the non-Brahmins and Harijans remained untouched by the new learning. While the Harijans were given hardly any opportunity to excel, effectively shut out of Western education by poverty and high caste opposition, the wealthy non-Brahmin trading castes, whether the Chettis of Tamilnadu or the Komatis of Telugu country, showed little interest in the new learning. A similar spirit of unconcern was also displayed by the great agricultural castes of South India who were more content with their traditional pursuits than interested in coming to terms with an alien culture, although it must be said that some of the wealthier agricultural families, especially the Vellalars, did send their sons to colleges. But throughout the nineteenth century, the ingrained habits of social and occupational behavior militated against zealous acceptance of Western education, especially at a collegiate level, by the non-Brahmins and Harijans.*

* The performance of the Muslims in Western education will be examined in Chapter 6.

SEARCH FOR OFFICIAL EMPLOYMENT

By 1886, after three decades of university education, a total of 18,785 had passed the matriculation examination in South India.* Although this number was small in relation to the population of the Presidency (1:1,700), it was nevertheless high in terms of opportunities available in the public service, commerce, and industry. Hence, the question of employment for the educated became one of the central issues by the 1880s, affecting not only the very structure of the educational system but also having important political implications in the Madras Presidency.

During the 1860s and 1870s Indians passing through the portals of higher learning had their eyes fixed on the public service. A graduate was reported as saying in 1864:

Education has been made to subserve this end. viz. the creation of an intelligent class of Government servants. Hence for a long time the notion has prevailed and even now I think it is prevailing in some parts that the object of education is Government service. If we ask a Hindu Gentleman why he sends his son to school, his answer will be that his son may obtain his livelihood in future, that he may secure some employment under Government and pass his days in quiet and ease without being put to the necessity of begging for his bread.¹⁸

Without doubt the notion that Western education was the passport to official employment was widely prevalent at this time. In part, this belief was stimulated by the early advocates of Western education in South India: Elphinstone, George Norton and Powell had all sought to

* See Table 3.1, p. 109.

popularize the new learning by assuring the Indians that preference would be given to those who were trained in Western culture. The institution of the General Test in 1858 reinforced this belief. Also, the notion gained currency from the performance of the Proficients of the Madras High School. The success of the administrative elite in achieving fame and prestige in government service, under the active auspices of the Madras authorities, impressed on the minds of the succeeding generation that public service held the key to success and influence. The feats of Madava Rao, Muthusamy Iyer, and Rama Iyengar doubtless inspired many graduates who followed them to believe that they would become the next generation of dewans, High Court judges, and heads of departments.

But this is not the entire explanation. The norms and values derived from caste also determined the choice of occupation. The bulk of the graduates of South India came from the upper Hindu castes, notably, Brahmins. For centuries these castes had been dominating the learned and administrative professions. They despised manual work and held in contempt commercial and industrial pursuits. In turning to Western education, these castes were largely endeavoring to perpetuate their traditional life styles and occupations.

About the time that the first graduates were emerging from the portals of the University of Madras, policies of recruitment into the administration of the British Raj were being radically recast. Two basic changes (made after 1850) were to have important consequences for Indian graduates in search of official employment. First, there was the removal of all barriers against Indians entering the administrative service, especially at the higher levels. Second, there was the British acceptance of the principle that all but the most menial positions in the public service must be filled on the basis of open competition. Although the actual implementation of these policy changes did not always satisfy Indian opinion, their effect

nonetheless was to pave the way for educated elements in South India to infiltrate into many of the middle ranking positions in the administration of the Madras Presidency.

Indian representation was weakest at the apex of the Indian administrative structure, known as the Covenanted Civil Service.* This prestigious service was manned by a select corps of largely European officials, numbering less than a thousand. Called Covenanted Civilians, these officials controlled the key positions both in the central and provincial secretariats as well as in the district administration. In 1853 the Covenanted Civil Service was thrown open to competition and in the following year racial disabilities were removed by law. Though these were important concessions to Indian aspirants, the fact that the competitive examinations were held in England and the prescription later on of a low age limit almost nullified these concessions. For Brahmins and some high caste non-Brahmin Hindus, ritual taboos against sea travel ruled out the possibility of going to England to compete. For many other groups, the substantial outlay that was required to undertake such a visit made it hardly a worthwhile proposition. To add to the difficulties, the progressive reduction of the age of entry into the Covenanted Civil Service placed Indian competitors at a disadvantage vis-a-vis their British counterparts. In 1864 the upper age limit was reduced from twenty-two to twenty-one and in 1876 it was further reduced to nineteen. At this youthful age, Indians had yet to gain a sufficiently strong foundation in English, or the other branches of substantive knowledge to stand a chance against their English rivals trained

* The term is derived from the word "covenant" which every official in this service was expected to sign with the Secretary of State for India, swearing loyalty to the British Crown and pledging to uphold the rules of the service.

largely in the public schools. Viceroy Ripon testified in 1883 that the effect of the 1876 age reduction had "undoubtedly been altogether to shut the door of the competitive examinations in England to natives of India."¹⁹ Indeed, after three decades of competitive examinations, South India could only boast of a single successful entrant into this service.

Hence, when nationalist opinion became organized in the 1880s, the Covenanted Civil Service became one of its prime targets. The Indian National Congress passed resolutions annually calling for the raising of the age limit and the institution of simultaneous examinations in England and India. The former demand was conceded by the Public Service Commission in its report of 1888 and was implemented four years later, but the latter continued to be a nationalist grievance for several more decades.

Placed below the Covenanted Civil Service was the Statutory Civil Service, a new branch created in 1870 by a Statute of the British Parliament which empowered the Indian Government to appoint Indians to any position in the public service without having to resort to competitive examinations. The intention here was to provide an alternative outlet for Indians who were being practically shut out of the Covenanted Civil Service. When the rules of this service were drafted by the Indian authorities in 1879, they obviously wanted to recruit Indians of high social status without showing too much concern for educational attainments. In Madras, the government largely adhered to this principle and between 1879 and 1886 made eight appointments of "Statutory Civilians" from "young men of good family or social position."²⁰ This mode of selection aroused strong criticism in several quarters. However, the Statutory Civil Service offered far too few openings for the educated and its abolition in 1892 was hardly mourned, even in official circles.

The base of the Indian administrative pyramid

was formed by the Uncovenanted Service, so styled because its officers were not required to sign a covenant. It was this service which came to provide the main outlet for educated employment in South India during the second half of the nineteenth century. A large and complex establishment, the Uncovenanted Service came to include multifarious subordinate grades that existed within the district administration, on the one hand, and in the special departments, on the other. It is not possible here to give a detailed listing of these various grades. However, in the district administration, except for the handful of top positions, like those of the Collector, Sub-Collector, Head Assistant, or Zillah Judge, which were filled by Covenanted Civilians, the rest of the posts were designated Uncovenanted and were largely held by Indians. In the special departments, like Registration, Education, Settlement, Revenue Survey, Police, Public Works, Salt, Forest, and Jail, the heads were invariably Covenanted Civilians while the subordinate staff were designated Uncovenanted officers.

Selection into the Uncovenanted Service was on the basis of merit and proven ability. From 1858 onwards, Indian aspirants to this service, except for very menial posts, had to pass the General Test examinations conducted by the Madras Government or possess a university qualification.²¹ Recruitment into the district administration was entrusted to the Collector, while in the special departments it was the responsibility of the respective departmental heads. Only in the case of the elite officers in the service, notably, deputy collectors, subordinate judges, district *munsifs*, and *tahsildars*, was selection either done by or required the sanction of the Governor-in-Council.²²

Ever since the new system of recruitment into the Uncovenanted Service came into operation in 1858, it became evident that there would be more qualified candidates than jobs available. This invested considerable discretion in the heads of

departments as to who among these qualified aspirants they should recruit and at what point in the service hierarchy. Some heads exercised their discretion by selecting almost exclusively from among those who had passed the General Test, often at a very low grade, and then promoting them according to performance and experience. Such a policy placed those with university qualification at some disadvantage. Other departmental heads tried to relate different educational attainments to the different grades in the Uncovenanted Service. While filling the lower rungs with those having a pass in the General Test or matriculation, they reserved the higher posts almost entirely to graduates. Consequently, while some departments had only a sprinkling of graduates, others were heavily populated by such elements.

The different recruitment policies of the departments in the Madras Presidency were revealed at the inquiry undertaken by the Public Service Commission in 1886-87. At the level of the district administration, which was divided into the executive and judicial branches, it was found that there was a higher proportion of graduates in the judicial than in the executive line. Of a total of 120 judicial officers, called subordinate judges and district *munsifs*, 34 were graduates, 14 had passed First Arts, 32 were matriculates, and the remaining 40 had no university qualification. In the executive service, on the other hand, out of 255 officers who were either deputy collectors or *tahsildars*, only 10 were graduates, 18 had passed First Arts, 52 were matriculates, and the remaining 175 had no university qualification.²³ Hence, while 1 in every 4 of the judicial officers was a graduate, only 1 in every 25 of the executive officers had a similar qualification.

Such variations were even more marked in the special departments of the Madras Government, reflecting largely the different recruitment policies of their heads. Some departments became virtual preserves of graduates. One such department was

Registration. Organized in 1865, its first Inspector-General made it a deliberate policy to attract educated applicants, whether in the clerical side or at the level of special registrars and subregistrars. In 1884, of the 260 special and subregistrars in the department, 117 were graduates, 102 had passed First Arts, 36 were matriculates, and the remaining 5 had no university qualification.²⁴

Some departments, however, showed less willingness to employ Indian graduates. The Police Department, though dominated by the Indian element in the lower ranks, rarely attracted applicants with university qualifications. The generally low esteem in which the profession was held, the subordinate level at which recruitment was made, and the alleged partiality shown towards Europeans in promotion served to discourage educated Indians from joining this department. Of the forty-nine gazetted posts in the department in 1886 only one was held by an Indian.²⁵

A similar situation prevailed in the Salt Department. It was the Department's policy to recruit Europeans exclusively into certain higher grades on the grounds that they were best fitted "to govern a large number of [Indian] subordinates and enforce discipline." Hence, Indian graduates were a rarity in the Department: in 1884 there were only 18 graduates in an establishment which had 487 posts carrying salaries of Rs 100 and above.²⁶

Besides the Covenanted, Statutory, and Uncovenanted services, the only other area where there was an outlet for official employment was the administration of the Indian or "Native" States. Little information is forthcoming about the mode of recruitment into the service of such States as Mysore, Travancore, Cochin, or Hyderabad. It is known, however, that since about the middle of the nineteenth century, some of the important executive and judicial positions in these States began to be filled by university graduates. Attempts to rationalize the administration, often under the

promptings of the British Resident in the State, demanded that an efficient and honest corps of officials be recruited. Increasingly such men came from the ranks of the Western-educated class, who filled positions of trust and influence, including that of the *dewan*. In 1891 it was estimated that 174 Arts graduates were in the official employment of Indian States.²⁷

Without a shadow of doubt the public service provided the largest single outlet for the Western-educated class in South India during the nineteenth century. A survey of the occupational distribution among Arts graduates of all colleges affiliated to Madras University in 1882 revealed that 416 out of 971 (or 43 per cent) were public servants. Figures compiled for the Madras Presidency College in this period confirm this overall trend of graduate employment in South India: of its 387 graduates in 1882, a total of 175 (or 45 per cent) were in official employment. Estimates for the eighties are not available in isolation. However, of the 2,386 Arts graduates on the rolls of the Madras University in 1891, no fewer than 1,019 (or 43 per cent) were public servants.²⁸ These figures reveal the continuing attraction of government employment among Indian graduates, and there were few signs of any weakening in the government's position as the leading employer of educated talent in South India.

A feature of administrative recruitment was the preponderance of the Brahmins (see Table 3.3). In 1886 the Brahmins held 42 per cent of all posts in the Madras Government carrying a monthly salary of over Rs 10. Brahmin domination was even more marked at the higher level of the Uncovenanted Service: of the 349 elite posts in the executive and judicial line in 1886, no less than 202 (or 58 per cent) were in Brahmin hands.²⁹ In certain special departments, Brahmin representation was just as preponderant. In the Registration Department, for example, 217 out of 365 officers were Brahmins, although since 1880 it was the policy of the Department "to reduce the number of Brahmins and to allow

all classes [to] have a fair share of the appointments."³⁰ However, so long as competition remained the main criterion for recruitment, especially for posts carrying salaries of Rs 10 and above, Brahmin supremacy in higher education ensured their domination of the public service.

Table 3.3
Composition of the Public Service

Caste or Communal Group	Percentage of Total Population	Percentage of Appointments Held of Over Rs 10 per Month	Percentage of Appointments Held of Rs 10 and Below per Month	Total
Brahmins	3.1	42.2	4.4	19.2
Non-Brahmin Hindus	86.6	36.5	67.7	55.4
Muslims	6.3	5.5	24.1	16.8
Indian Christians	2.3	4.9	3.5	4.1
Europeans & Eurasians	0.1	10.9	0.3	4.5
Others	1.6	0	0	0
Total	100	100	100	100

Source: *MEP*, Vol. 3045, No. 386 (Table covers the year 1886).

To those British officials who had assumed that open competition would ensure a fair distribution of government jobs among the various communities in South India, the results were manifestly disappointing. W. R. Cornish, the Census Commissioner in 1871, noted that the introduction of competition had only "tended to strengthen their [Brahmin] position in the executive," which he attributed to the fact that the Brahmins were the first to recognize "the necessity of educating their youths to qualify for admission into the civil service."³¹ Official concern over the working of the competition system found expression in 1887 following a detailed inquiry into the strength of the various caste and communal groups in the Uncovenanted Service of the Madras Government. The inquiry revealed that while non-Brahmin Hindus,

Harijans, and Muslims were underrepresented, Brahmins, Eurasians, and Europeans enjoyed more than their fair share of official patronage. It was found that in certain departments, especially Settlement, Registration, Education, and Revenue, Brahmin preponderance was excessive.

While unwilling to create the impression that it was hostile to Brahmin admission into the public service, the Madras Government nevertheless felt compelled to draw the attention of heads of departments to the inexpediency of allowing "any single class to monopolise the whole patronage of Government."³² In 1890, when the Provincial Civil Service scheme was being worked out in South India, the Madras authorities decided that free competition to fill the vacant posts of deputy collectors should be modified to enable the government to appoint one-third of the vacancies on the basis of selection from among persons of proved merit and ability. Even this restriction did not halt the influx of the Brahmins, compelling the Madras Government to impose further restrictions on open competition in 1896. Henceforth, appointments of deputy collectors by competition were limited to one per year, an arrangement which the local authorities felt would "afford opportunities for correcting the distribution of these appointments among the various classes of the community, from time to time."³³

Although British officials regarded Brahmin domination of the public service in the late nineteenth century as essentially a continuation of what had prevailed in earlier decades, they failed to grasp the fact that open competition had at least brought about significant changes in the distribution of administrative power within the Brahmin community in South India. Particularly significant was the relative decline in the position of the Desasthas, who no longer held the keys to administrative influence in the districts. Instead, other Brahmin groups had increasingly come to the forefront, notably, the Sri-Vaishnavas and

Smarthas of Tamilnadu and the Niyogis of the Northern Circars. The pervasive influence of the former was nowhere more apparent than in Tanjore district:

Of all the several Brahmanical communities in Tanjore, the Dravidas or Tamilians, notably the Aiyangar section, are by far the most industrious and thrifty, as well as intelligent; they are at present the most rising and prosperous. There is hardly a pursuit, literary, industrial or professional, to which they do not apply themselves with remarkable success. They are found in all departments of the Government service; as pleaders they are pre-eminently successful. No class of people have availed themselves, to the extent the Tamil Brahmins have, of the education imparted by the Combaconum College and other schools scattered over the district.³⁴

DIVERSIFICATION OF THE EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

The public service, despite its capacity to absorb large numbers of educated Indians, could not conceivably hope to find suitable positions for the ever-growing numbers of Indians graduating from high schools and colleges in South India. This created a social problem of considerable magnitude as the literary character of the educational training, coupled with higher caste aversion to commercial and manual pursuits, inevitably drove many to seek refuge in teaching, journalism, or other lowly paid positions. The problem of finding employment for the educated commensurate with their attainments had attracted notice during the 1860s, but it was not until a decade later that it compelled more serious consideration at the higher levels of the Madras Government. In 1875, while speaking to the students at the Presidency College, Governor Lord Hobart warned that those who studied for the sake

of official employment would face "a bitter disappointment." He went on to say that the primary object of education was not to clothe graduates "with official authority, but to adorn and invigorate the current of their lives."³⁵ But such exhortations did little to relieve the pressure for state employment which was felt in its most acute form at the level of those passing the General Test. In 1879 the Director of Public Instruction admitted that the number passing this test was "enormously in excess of the number of appointments available."³⁶

University graduates, though not in the same predicament, nevertheless found themselves accepting positions which they would have scorned a few years before. T. Muthusamy Iyer, in a speech to the Presidency College students in 1886, indicated the kind of prospects which they would have to encounter after their college career:

When I left the College 32 years ago, there were about 75 highly educated men whose attainments may be said to be co-extensive with those of our graduates. At present there are upwards of 1,500 B.A.'s besides 7,000 undergraduates and matriculates. Public offices are largely filled with educated men and the Bar is crowded. The church, the army and the navy are not available to you as a profession as they are to Englishmen in England.³⁷

By the 1880s it had become commonplace to talk of the diminishing opportunities of the university graduates, and to infer that such qualifications no longer commanded the market value of the earlier years. Indeed, at the hearing of the Public Service Commission in Madras in 1887, both officials and nonofficials, Indians and Europeans, testified that graduates were greatly in excess of jobs and that they could be recruited at salaries as low as Rs 15 per month. At the same time, fears were expressed in various circles that the presence of an

educated unemployed or underemployed class would "breed only an element of dangerous discontent in the community."³⁸

In their efforts to come to grips with the problem, the educational authorities in South India decided to raise the academic standards of the university and Uncovenanted Service examinations, impose higher fees on those seeking collegiate instruction, and insist on candidates producing certificates of having studied in recognized educational institutions.

Though these measures were introduced with the ostensible aim of improving the quality of instruction, their real purpose was to restrict the numbers passing university and public service examinations. As examination standards began to be raised, failure rates began to soar, in some years reaching inordinately high levels. In 1889, for instance, 89 per cent of those presenting themselves for the F.A. examination failed and the *Journal of Education* commented, with some understatement, that the examiners of late were showing "an increasing tendency towards severity."³⁹ A high failure rate was also evident in the Pleader's examination, brought about by the raising of the pass mark and the repeated revision of the curriculum. Between 1888 and 1892, only 99 succeeded in passing the First Grade Pleader's examination out of a total of 888 candidates, an average pass rate of 11 per cent.⁴⁰ Not unnaturally, examinations came to be regarded as "something like a lottery. In some years the percentage of passes is fair; in others it is horribly low."⁴¹ Failure in one attempt was not taken as the signal to bow out of the examination altogether. Like the intrepid gambler, those who failed continued to press their luck over a number of occasions, on borrowed time and sometimes on borrowed money. Some took casual jobs to tide them over their financial problems.

The tightening up of academic standards was at best only a negative remedy to the problem of educated unemployment and at worst could produce

equally serious social consequences. More important in tackling the problem from the long range point of view was the decision to diversify the educational system in South India by strengthening such courses as medicine, science, and engineering and by introducing more practical courses to meet the demands for trained personnel in agriculture, industry, and commerce.

Indeed, it was the constitution of the Education Commission in 1882 which provided a much needed opportunity to reappraise some of the premises on which Indian educational policy had been evolving for over a generation. Although its terms of reference disavowed the need for any inquiry into "the general working of the Indian Universities" or the state of technical education, the Education Commission could hardly ignore these weighty subjects, especially as they were attracting an element of political controversy.

In its recommendations, the Education Commission emphasized the need for "diversity of culture, both on the literary and on the physical side." At the level of secondary education, it urged that: "in the upper classes of high schools there be two divisions, one leading to the Entrance examination of the Universities, the other of a more practical character, intended to fit youths for commercial or non-literary pursuits." As for higher education, the Education Commission felt that greater provision should be made for the study of science in government and aided colleges.⁴² These proposals found general acceptance among the educational authorities in Madras, and the next decade witnessed a concerted attempt on their part to reorientate the educational system along the lines suggested by the Educational Commission.

The main task was to recast the entire curriculum of the secondary schools, and ensure the popularity of the new courses by awarding jobs in the public and related services. In March 1886 the higher examinations in Science, Art, Industries and Commerce were instituted in the hope of encouraging

instruction "in those kinds of knowledge which bear upon the different branches of the industry now existing in this Presidency or suitable for it." Among the subjects prescribed were mechanical drawing, metallurgy, mineralogy, animal physiology, forestry, painting, design, and surveying. In the following year, the Middle School examination was revised. The changes divided the examination into "a general side" and "a technical and industrial side." Incorporated in the latter section was a whole range of new subjects to equip youths for technical, commercial, and industrial pursuits.⁴³ Changes in curriculum were also announced for the Upper Secondary forms in 1889, aimed at stimulating "secondary and technical education, of improving its character and of widening its scope." Included among the optional courses were such subjects as hydraulics, mechanical drawing, agriculture, forestry, printing, bookkeeping, and banking. Those successful in these examinations were to receive certificates from the Commissioner of the Uncertificated Service Examination, a necessary passport for public employment.⁴⁴

Among those who welcomed these changes were some of the more influential private and aided institutions of learning. There had been a growing recognition in Madras of the need to divert educated talent into commercial and industrial vocations. Symptomatic of this change of attitude was the decision of the Trustees of Pachaiyappa Charities to encourage commercial education. Thus far, the commercial world had been wholly neglected by the Western-educated class, and the few who had tried to enter the profession as *dubashes*, bankers, or clerks were a disappointment to their employers. It was a common complaint that educated applicants knew "nothing of book-keeping, and their handwriting is bad, and that they are in many cases unable to compose a simple letter."

The remedy lay in providing a commercial training, and the arrival of John Adam as Principal of Pachaiyappa College in 1884 proved timely. He

drafted a scheme for commercial education* and persuaded the Director of Public Instruction to incorporate it in the revised curriculum for the Middle School examination. A shorthand class was started in Pachaiyappa College in 1884, and the favorable response emboldened its Trustees to launch a separate commercial school two years later. This lead was followed by other educational agencies, including the Christian missions, and between 1890 and 1894 a total of 154 students had obtained certificates in bookkeeping, correspondence or banking.⁴⁵ The idea of raising "a commercially educated middle class, which will not, on the one hand, think business details beneath its dignity, nor, on the other, find them above its capacity,"⁴⁶ thus found a modest realization before the nineteenth century drew to a close.

Simultaneously, conscious attempts were made to encourage industrial education. In 1883-84 there were barely 400 students receiving training in six schools throughout the Madras Presidency, of which some partook "more the nature of charity schools designed to feed, house and clothe a certain number of poor children, than of schools where young people are taught on scientific principles the theory and practice of some of the industrial arts." Under the new policy, these schools were re-organized, provided with equipment and trained teachers, while students were awarded scholarships

* John Adam, a graduate of Cambridge, was hailed as "the father of commercial education" in South India for his attempts to stimulate commercial training both within the Pachaiyappa College and elsewhere. In 1891 he relinquished the principalship of the College to read law and subsequently became a barrister at the Madras High Court. He was an active participant in Congress affairs for many years, and was its spokesman on commercial and technical education. *Journal of the National Indian Association*, No. 164 (August 1884): 384.

to complete their training. In some institutions, the government decided to introduce a course on some recognized craft, as was the case in Rajahmundry College where a carpentry class was started in 1885. This experiment, though of a modest kind, was significant in so far as it helped "to break down the prejudice among the caste Hindus against manual labour."⁴⁷

The educational authorities also welcomed any private support to stimulate industrial education. In 1887 at the celebrations to mark Queen Victoria's Jubilee, over Rs 100,000 was raised from private sources in Madras in the cause of technical education. The Madras Government agreed to subscribe an equal amount, and the result was the erection of the Victoria Technical Institute.⁴⁸

The need for a shift of emphasis away from purely literary education was also recognized at the level of collegiate instruction. It had long been a source of complaint that "university education is a literary education as contrasted with technical education." Although there was provision for B.A. students to read a course in Physical Science, it was not popular, and the Madras Provincial Committee of the Education Commission felt compelled to draw attention to the absence of "an opportunity for students to graduate in a scientific course."⁴⁹

But over the next decade little was done to provide a degree course in science, partly due to the conservative Senate of the Madras University, although in the revision of the B.A. curriculum in 1891-92 more options were added to the science division. In 1895, there were 472 students in the science division of the B.A. class who, on graduation, were expected to apply their knowledge to "arts, industries and manufactures." Although the changes hardly went to the extent that many had hoped, there was nevertheless confidence in official circles in the ability of the existing colleges in South India to turn out "young men imbued to some extent with the scientific spirit and more or less

with scientific facts, laws and methods."⁵⁰

Also indicative of the trend towards educational diversification was the growing popularity of medicine and engineering. The Madras Medical School, established in 1835 to train subordinate medical staff, was unpopular among some Hindu castes during the early years because of the opposition to Western medical science and ritual taboos associated with the profession as such. Despite the abstention of the Brahmins, a total of 603 students had passed out of the institution between 1835 and 1851 and entered service as hospital assistants and apprentices.⁵¹ With the establishment of the Medical College in 1857, facilities were now available for advanced training. However, the long duration of the course and the preference shown to those graduating in English universities checked the progress of the college and only eleven candidates succeeded in taking the degree between 1858 and 1878.

However, the situation changed during the eighties with the growing popularity of science and diminution in employment prospects for those in literary pursuits. Hence, between 1878 and 1894 a total of 186 doctors graduated from the Medical College. The engineering profession, though it did not show the same growth rate, also began to attract more students during the eighties. While only 24 students had graduated from the Engineering College between 1858 and 1880, a total of 55 passed out during the next fifteen years.* The growth rate would have been faster but for the fact that graduates had great difficulty in finding "an opening at all commensurate with the time, labour and expense involved in securing their professional education."⁵²

* See Table 3.1.

RISE OF INDEPENDENT PROFESSIONS

The diversification of the educational system was only one consequence flowing from the inability of the public service to absorb the growing Western-educated class in South India. Another consequence, albeit of an indirect kind, was the remarkable acceleration in the growth of three independent professions, namely, law, teaching and journalism.

The important role that the members of these three professions played in the political and social movements of South India, especially after 1880, can hardly be exaggerated. In the words of the *Hindu*: "School-masters, lawyers, and journalists form the most important and active members of political bodies or associations."⁵³ This was a claim which was admitted on all sides, not the least by the ruling authorities who were constantly endeavoring to find ways and means to combat the political radicalism of these groups and circumscribe the limits of their agitational activity.

While the administrative elite, and indeed all Indians in the service of the government, were reluctant to be drawn into any kind of overt political agitation for fear of government reprisal, these three professional groups presented themselves as obvious foci of political leadership. Their commitment to secular, nonsectarian politics, their all-India orientation, and their genius for organization and propaganda combined to transform the style of politics in South India during the 1880s and brought the presidency into the mainstream of nationalist politics as represented by the Indian National Congress.

Of these three professional groups, the lawyers exercised the strongest influence. Their training acquainted them with the intricacies of the British legal system, including constitutional law and history, as well as with the highly-complicated Hindu law. If one gave them an insight into the British political system, the other enabled them to shake the proverbial "pagoda tree," largely

at the expense of the litigious-minded landed gentry of South India. The relative affluence of the lawyers, while increasingly attracting the best brains into the profession, also ensured their robust independence in political issues. In the words of one European barrister in Madras, "the best political intellect in the country is, in the main, to be found in the keeping of the Vakils On the whole, the best educated men in the country are the lawyers. They are also the most, if not the only independent men in the [Madras] Presidency."⁵⁴ The legal profession, more than any other independent pursuit, also provided an opportunity to travel, especially to the lawyer in the metropolis. Visits for professional reasons were used to establish links with political groups in the *mofussil* towns. Indeed, by their training, affluence, and enterprise, the lawyers had equipped themselves as leaders in the quest for political power.

The growth of the legal profession in South India was to a considerable degree influenced by British policies. During the early years of the British Raj, Indian pleaders or *vakils* were allowed to practice on receiving "a sunnud of appointment duly authenticated by the court to which they may be respectively attached." At this stage, entry into the profession rested on no proven tests of ability or knowledge, although this was partially rectified in 1817 by the decision to establish "native classes to study the hindoo and mahomedan law and the regulations passed by Government, and for the periodical examination of students in those classes."⁵⁵ Despite this provision, judges in the *mofussil* courts still could grant *sunnuds* of appointment to anyone whom they deemed to be "a fit and proper person," and these "private" or "uncertified" pleaders continued to practice throughout the nineteenth century.

However, the overall tendency, especially during the second half of the century, was to institute more regular and rigorous examinations in

order to raise a better quality of Indian pleaders. The first major step in this direction was taken in 1856 with the introduction of the pleadership examinations. Candidates were required to read Hindu and Muslim law, the law of evidence, and the regulations and acts of government. Those successful in these examinations were allowed to practice in the Sadr courts and after 1861 in the district courts. In subsequent years the pleadership examinations underwent frequent changes, invariably to raise the qualifications of those wishing to compete. When the Legal Practitioners Act came into operation in 1879, the right of sitting for this examination was confined upon those who had passed the matriculation. Successful candidates were divided into first and second grade pleaders, based on their performance, with the former allowed to practice in district courts and the latter in district *munsif's* courts.⁵⁶ During the latter decades of the nineteenth century, it was this class of legal practitioners who dominated the *mofussil* courts, although some "private" *vakils* were still allowed to appear in certain cases.

A second mode of entry into the legal profession was the Bachelor of Law (B.L.) examinations instituted in the Madras University in 1858. Here the training was far more rigorous than in the case of the pleaders, and the degree course was obviously designed to produce a superior class of legal practitioners. The recipients of the B.L. degree were allowed to appear both in the High Court and in the district courts and consequently enjoyed a much higher status and prestige than the pleaders. Not surprisingly, it was from the ranks of the law graduates that the Madras Government recruited its Indian judges of the High Court and Government Pleaders. A third route of entry into the profession was the bar examination in England. The Europeans practicing in South India invariably entered through this route. However, few South Indians attempted this path; the costs involved and the strong ritual objections on the part of the

higher castes against sea travel severely restricted the numbers proceeding to England to take the bar examinations.

During the 1850s and 1860s the Madras bar was dominated by the European barristers. Early in the field and possessing superior training and grasp of the law, many European barristers were able to collect "handsome incomes." There were instances of single fees amounting to Rs 30,000, and many of the European lawyers in Madras were earning about Rs 10,000 a month. Their Indian rivals were slow in challenging this supremacy; indeed, many of the *vakils* were acting as juniors to their European counterparts, often on very moderate incomes.⁵⁷

The turning point came during the 1870s when many *vakils* decided to go on their own and to exploit their knowledge of Hindu law. By mastering the intricacies of Hindu law, often buried in ancient Sanskrit texts, the *vakils* became "better equipped than the Barristers and Attorneys in respect of laws of special applicability to Indian cases."⁵⁸ Suits involving inheritance and property rights were increasingly referred to them, and by the 1880s the Original Side of the Madras bar was under virtual *vakil* control. Some even began to encroach on the Appellate Side, long the preserve of the European barristers.⁵⁹ The "Vakil Raj," so often used to describe *vakil* domination of political movements in India, was first established in the legal profession, largely at the expense of European practitioners.

The practice of appointing private pleaders rules out the possibility of accurately assessing the growth of the legal profession in South India. According to the census returns in 1881, there were 4,705 legal practitioners in the Madras Presidency, which included not only private pleaders but also petition writers. Of these 64 were barristers, solicitors, and attorneys with British qualifications, while 2,516 were classified as *vakils*.⁶⁰ As only 164 had graduated with a law degree from the Madras University up to 1882, it is obvious that

the vast majority of the *vakils* were pleaders, practicing in the *mofussil* courts. Despite claims that the bar was getting crowded, the profession remained lucrative throughout the eighties and the envy of those in other vocations. An indication of its popularity was the output of law graduates in the Madras University: while only 85 obtained the degree during the 1870s, a total of 269 passed during the ensuing decade. The pleadership examinations also reflected a similar trend: 21 passed in 1883, 135 in 1889 and 233 in 1892. With this accelerated expansion the profession became more competitive and less remunerative. This provoked the *Madras Law Journal* to voice its unease about the state of the profession in 1900:⁶¹

The ranks of the profession are rapidly lengthening out. Competition is getting day by day keener, and the law courts being the only sphere where a man of education can earn his livelihood apart from the public service, persons of varying degrees of moral elevation crowd into the ranks of the profession without any adequate check or control or undergoing a proper process of sifting.

There was an element of exaggeration in this claim that the ethical standards of the profession had declined. If anything, the contrary was true, for, as the profession became more lucrative and prestigious, there were more insistent demands for enforcing a rigid code of professional conduct. As early as 1882 Muthusamy Iyer had called for a *vakils'* association in Madras which would "bring the whole body of legal practitioners in the country under wholesome professional control" along the lines of the Inns of Court in England.⁶² However, the response to this appeal was slow in coming, and it was not until March 1889 that the Madras High Court *Vakils'* Association was formed. Representing that group which had gained most in terms of prestige and wealth, this body was largely successful

at enforcing agreed rules of professional conduct.⁶³ It also became a pressure group agitating for the interests of the *vakils*, especially for the latter's entry into such positions as Official Trustee, Government Pleader, Officer of the Clerk of the Crown and Official Assignee, Crown Prosecutor, Law Reporter, and Attorney-General, which even in the 1890s were still the preserve of the European barristers.⁶⁴

Established on a less lucrative footing, but nevertheless possessing political influence, was the teaching profession. The role of the teacher in the work of India's regeneration was performed on two distinct planes. Within the classroom, the teacher molded the thinking of his pupils, and instilled in them the values and motivations which he idealized. Outside the classroom, the teacher shouldered some of the burden of public work, employing his spare hours either in managing religious institutions, settling caste disputes, running the affairs of municipal and district boards, or organizing debating societies or political meetings. The teacher was often recruited to speak on important issues, especially in the more remote areas of the *mofussil*, and at times he also contributed to the local newspaper. Hence, in many parts of South India, "the most competent and trusted adviser in matters [of] politics was the schoolmaster."⁶⁵

The teaching profession, despite the growing popularity of education during the second half of the nineteenth century, always retained a certain fluidity. Low salaries, poor promotional prospects, and absence of any retirement benefits divested the profession of many of its attractions. Indeed, teaching was only the last resort of the Western-educated class, and even then many used it as a springboard to other professions. Disgruntled teachers spent their spare hours, and sometimes even their teaching time, studying for university or public examinations. Often the schoolmaster was not professionally qualified to teach, nor did he

show any disposition to undergo such training. The problem was most acute at the level of primary instruction where trained teachers, as the Madras Provincial Committee of Education Commission remarked in 1884, were "a pressing want."⁶⁶ Even among graduate teachers, many did not have a teaching qualification, admittedly performing a makeshift duty and awaiting the earliest escape to a more rewarding profession.

However, the teaching profession began to attain some measure of stability and respectability during the 1880s, partly with the diminution of employment prospects in public service and partly with new opportunities being created for private initiative in secondary and higher education. The latter stemmed directly from the official policy of withdrawing from higher and secondary education, and this provided a challenge and opportunity to Indians anxious that the momentum of Western education should not be lost. Aided by public subscriptions, some Indian graduates established high schools in centers where there was a demand for education. One successful venture was the Native High School in Kumbaconam. Founded in 1876 by three Brahmin graduates, this school overcame some of its teething troubles and by 1889 had produced a total of 350 matriculate passes.⁶⁷ The success of this venture inspired other graduates to establish similar schools elsewhere.*

Accurate estimates of the growth of the teaching profession are difficult to obtain, largely owing to the absence of reliable data about teachers in indigenous schools. According to the

* K. Subba Rao, who started his career by establishing a high school in Coimbatore in 1882, says that the example of the Native High School in Kumbaconam "awakened a keen desire in several of the students to take to the profession of teaching and to open new schools wherever needed." K. Subba Rao, *Revived Memories*, pp. 47-48.

census returns of 1891, a total 103,970 people were employed in teaching, inspecting, and managing educational institutions in the Madras Presidency.⁶⁸ Obviously, the vast majority were teachers of primary and village schools. Barely one in ten were involved with secondary or higher education. Those holding degrees from a university were a small minority. In 1891 only 371 of the B.A. graduates of Madras University had entered the profession, either as principals of high schools, or lecturers in colleges, or as inspectors of schools.⁶⁹

As the teaching profession grew in strength and came to attain some measure of stability, there were growing demands for the improvement in the status and pay of teachers. John Adam, drawing on his experience in Pachaiyappa College, stated in 1895 that the elevation of the teaching profession would depend ultimately on pay and promotional prospects. So long as public service and other related professions were accorded a better treatment, he felt that teaching would remain "the refuge of the destitute, the last resort of those who find themselves unable to pass the portals of law or medicine or special test."⁷⁰

V. S. Srinivasa Sastri, a member of the profession which he believed had "fallen from its high dignity," argued that the ability of teachers should not be assessed on the basis of examination results. He felt that inspectors of schools, and indeed parents, laid too great a stress on students passing examinations rather than how they were being instructed. Character building, the inculcation of civic and social responsibilities, and the development of the capacity for clear thinking were all ignored. Srinivasa Sastri felt that so long as these aspects of education were neglected the teaching profession would not command much esteem nor the coming generation play any more constructive role in promoting social and political reforms.⁷¹

Others believed that the status of the profession could only be improved by forming teachers'

associations. The *Educational Review*, a monthly journal published in Madras, argued that such associations would serve "to create a pride in the teaching profession, to awaken an interest in educational questions, [and] to disseminate views on the methods of teaching and the theories of Education." Active canvassing led to the formation of the Madras Teachers' Guild in November 1895, and this body was expected to fulfill the dual function of improving the material prospects of its members and of providing a platform to discuss such educational issues as curricula, textbooks, and teaching methods.⁷²

Unlike law and teaching, journalism was a wholly "foreign plant" engrafted on Indian soil,⁷³ and its remarkable growth during the closing years of the nineteenth century epitomized the kind of transformation which Western rule had effected in the subcontinent. During the early years of the British Raj, the press had subserved a religious function as well as meeting the social and commercial needs of the European community. Christian missionaries had long grasped the importance of the printed word in disseminating their doctrines and they had set up their own presses to translate the Bible into Indian languages and publish periodicals and newspapers. In fact, the first vernacular printing press in South India had begun functioning during the early years of the eighteenth century, and soon the missionaries were publishing translations of well-known English works for use in schools, compiling grammars and dictionaries, and enlarging the vocabulary of the Indian languages by coining new words.⁷⁴ This lead was taken up by the Europeans in commerce and administration who saw the need for regular information about the state of business and what the government was doing. In 1785 the *Madras Courier* made its appearance as a weekly, and it was followed by the *Madras Gazette*, *Madras Male Asylum Herald*, and the *Madras Conservative*. None of these publications managed to survive for any great length of time, troubled as they

were by official restrictions and the absence of a consistent public demand.⁷⁵

Early Indian ventures into journalism in South India were doubtless influenced by the desire to uphold Hindu religious and social order in the face of bitter missionary onslaught. Nevertheless, the importance of disseminating information of local importance and elevating community life were ideals that were kept in mind. For instance, the *Carnatic Chronicle*, first published in 1833 and carrying articles in English, Tamil, and Telugu, attempted to discuss local issues without descending into religious controversies.⁷⁶ Similarly, the *Native Interpreter* was launched in 1840 with the avowed object of diffusing "useful knowledge amongst the Hindoo community through the medium of English language, and the opening of a channel through which Hindoo claims might be urged on the notice of the Government." However, during the religious convulsions of the forties, this organ increasingly assumed the role of the guardian of Hindu religion and heritage and vehemently attacked the Christian missionaries and their publications.⁷⁷ Even more militant were the Hindu religious societies, especially the Sadur Veda Siddhanta Sabha, which had its own press issuing a stream of publications in defence of Hinduism. Journalism, at this stage of its evolution in South India, could not escape from being drawn into religious disputes and to that extent it appeared to subserve religious rather than the secular needs of its readers.

However, as these theological controversies died out during the 1850s, journalism in South India came to assume an increasingly secular character. Especially significant in this transition was the appearance of a fresh crop of English Language newspapers. The *Athenaeum and Daily News* (1845), *Madras Times* (1858), and *Madras Mail* (1867), all European owned and edited, came to have a major share of the circulation in the Madras Presidency throughout the nineteenth century.

By contrast, Indian attempts in English

journalism at this juncture had less permanence. The *Crescent* (1844) and the *Rising Sun* (1853) folded up after a period of precarious existence. Their successors in the sixties, namely, the *Hindu Chronicle* and *Native Advocate*, fared even worse. During the 1870s the *Native Public Opinion* and *Madrassee* functioned as organs of Indian opinion until they merged into the *Madras Native Opinion* in 1877. However, this move did not save the new paper from extinction a few years later.⁷⁸ Nor were early Indian attempts in vernacular journalism any more successful, although in this field there was no European competition. Indeed, in February 1877 there were only thirteen vernacular newspapers in South India, with an estimated circulation of 4,000, catering to a population of about thirty million.⁷⁹

A new era in the history of Indian journalism dawned in Madras with the launching of the English language *Hindu* in September 1878 by "six ardent youths just out of college." Undaunted by failures in the past, the sponsors of this attempt believed that with luck and dedication they would be able to surmount whatever difficulties might stand in their way. Starting publication as a weekly, the *Hindu* soon acquired popularity by its fearless advocacy of Indian interests. In 1883 this paper was converted into a tri-weekly, and six years later it became a daily--the first Indian-owned daily in South India. As its editor explained subsequently, the success of the *Hindu* stemmed from the fact that it "fell harmoniously with the spirit of the times."⁸⁰

The success of the *Hindu* persuaded its editors to try their hand in the field of vernacular journalism. In 1881 a Tamil weekly called *Swadesamitran* was started with the aim of educating the Tamils on the political questions affecting the country at large. By slow stages this newspaper built up its circulation and popularity, and in 1899 it was made a daily--the first vernacular daily in South India.

Stimulated by the example of the *Hindu* and *Swadesamitran*, and taking advantage of a growing reading public, a host of Indian-owned newspapers emerged during the 1880s, published either in English, vernacular, or Anglo-vernacular. Two English newspapers which were started in the metropolis were the *People's Friend* (1881) and the *Hindu Observer* (1883), but neither survived long as they were unable to make much headway against the already entrenched newspapers. Besides, certain communal associations also started their own organs. The Madras Anjuman-i-Islamiah was served by the *Ittifaq*, the Eurasian and Anglo-Indian Association of Southern India by the *Eastern Guardian*, and the Indian Christians by the *Eastern Star*.

In the *mofussil* it was the vernacular and Anglo-vernacular press which achieved some degree of success. Edited largely by men who lacked higher education, and with very small capital outlay, the vernacular newspapers managed to survive by minimizing their costs and by catering to local needs. Some of the larger towns had more than one vernacular paper: Calicut in 1894 was served by three Malayalam weeklies. But the great majority of the *mofussil* towns had room for only one newspaper, and these towns largely accounted for the eighty-two vernacular and Anglo-vernacular papers circulating in South India in 1890.⁸¹

With the rapid expansion of the press in South India, journalism began to shed its amateur status and to emerge as full-fledged profession. The early Indian newspapers had failed partly because those who were responsible for their running were unable to "give their whole time" to the work.⁸² Even the *Hindu* was run for some years as a part-time concern, with both its editor and proprietor continuing their teaching duties. Similar instances were common in other such ventures. To a large extent this was a reflection of the hazards of the profession. Competition from Europeans, defaulting subscribers, and the refusal of the Indian capitalists to invest in the press kept the Indian-owned

newspapers in a state of precarious existence for much of the nineteenth century. The *Hindu* commented thus in 1903:⁸³

Newspaper enterprise in this country has not so far attracted the attention of capitalists and speculators. It has thriven by the efforts of patriotic men who disregarding the rewards of the legal profession or of the public service have affianced themselves to it. This is peculiar to journalism in India. It has been specially so to the *Hindu*.

In these circumstances, the profession held few attractions for the Western-educated class. Some graduates joined it as "a stepping stone for something better."⁸⁴ But the great majority who took to journalism were prompted more by political fervor than by material prospects. As the *Hindu* observed in 1897, "Journalism to [an] Indian is a means to public good."⁸⁵ If the profession lacked stability and financial attraction, it was not devoid of political influence and glamor.

THE PROFESSIONAL ELITE

In seeking to define the term professional elite, there are two fundamental problems which ought to be recognized at the outset. First, it is not possible to define this elite group in terms of formal positions, roles, or institutions of which it would form a part. Instead, it would be more pertinent to view this elite as a flexible category, as a social group in the process of attaining a corporate status. As such, the professional elite can be regarded as an aggregate of people sharing certain similarities in education, occupation, and norms of social behavior. For purposes of this study, the professional elite in late nineteenth century South India can be taken to mean those who had received a high level of Western

education and had equipped themselves with the special skills so essential for the functioning of a modernizing society. By this definition, the professional elite would include lawyers, teachers, editors, journalists, writers, doctors, and engineers.

A second difficulty in studying this elite group is the absence of data to assess its exact size during the nineteenth century. Census returns, the only detailed statistical enumeration of the professions undertaken during this period, provide at best only a rough and ready system of classification, and even then the value of this source is greatly diminished by its failure to furnish information on the educational or other qualifications of those listed under the various professions.

However, evidence from other sources, notably figures about the growth of Western education as provided by the Department of Public Instruction, makes it apparent that the size of the professional elite was small, even in relation to the so-called "Learned and Artistic Professions" listed in the decennial censuses of the period. That barely 19,000 candidates passed the matriculation examinations in South India up to 1886*--a prerequisite for entry into university and professional training --is generally indicative of the numbers passing out as lawyers, teachers of high schools and colleges, doctors, and engineers. The relative weakness of this group of 19,000 is also emphasized when it is realized that the larger group they were part of, the "Learned and Artistic Professions," as enumerated in the 1881 census, totalled 188,783.86

Although small, the professional elite was considerably more numerous than the administrative elite. No doubt this could be attributed to the significant expansion of higher education in South India following the elevation of the Presidency

* See Table 3.1.

College to university status in 1857 and the growing demand for trained personnel to fill such callings as law, medicine, and teaching. However, in social origins, there was little actual difference between the two elite groups. Both groups came almost exclusively from the upper Hindu castes, with Brahmins--be they Sri-Vaishnavas, Smartha, Niyogis, or Desasthas--predominating, while the rest belonged to the higher non-Brahmin castes, notably, Vellalars, Chettis, Kammas, and Nairs. The caste origin of the professional elite determined the social values of the group. This was especially so in its attitude towards job selection. True to upper caste ancestry, the professional elite regarded official employment in universal esteem; then came such "polite" professions as law, medicine, teaching, and journalism; trade was still regarded as vulgar, while manual labor was shunned at all costs.

Reinforcing this social coherence of the professional elite was the experience of a common educational training. As Western education held the key to the esteemed professions, and its acquisition was regarded as something of a status symbol, high caste families went to great lengths and made many sacrifices to get their sons educated. Parents living in remote *mofussil* areas sent their sons over hundreds of miles to towns which had a high school or college, often at great family expense and sometimes even drawing on the generosity of relatives and friends. Colleges in Madras commanded great prestige throughout South India, and, not surprisingly, such institutions as the Presidency College, Christian College, and Pachaiyappa College had a high proportion of *mofussil* students, some coming from such remote districts as Malabar and Tinnevelly. Students of these institutions, and particularly of Presidency College, developed close ties of friendship and an *esprit de corps* which often found institutional expression in the formation of literary societies, reading rooms, and debating clubs. *Mofussil* students were

invariably the more active participants of such activities, denied as they were of home and family life. When their educational training was completed, they either searched for an opening in the metropolis or migrated to some *mofussil* town which offered a lucrative position in any of the esteemed professions. Here they continued the habits they had cultivated during their college days, founding literary societies, participating in debates, or writing to the local newspapers.

What gave the professional elite a sense of identity, and set it off from the rest of the Western-educated community in South India, was its attitude towards the ruling power. In part, the educational training had instilled among the members of this elite group an appreciation of democratic values and a knowledge of the skills of effective political action. Inevitably, higher learning tended to emphasize the value of civil liberties while creating misgivings about the efficacy of authoritarian rule. Equally, the callings to which the professional elite belonged provided opportunities for resisting arbitrary government action and upholding the sanctity of the rule of law. The legal profession in particular came to occupy an honored place because of its role as the guardian of the values and rights of society. The astuteness of the Indian lawyers in mastering the complex judicial procedures which the British had introduced in the country, coupled with their knowledge of Hindu law, enabled them to serve as a buffer between the government and society and to soften somewhat the excesses of centralized rule which increasingly impinged upon the everyday life of the people through proliferation of economic and social controls. Similarly, editors and journalists of newspapers and periodicals rose in popular estimation because of their willingness to articulate the aspirations of society and criticize freely the actions of the government. By the 1880s, when a series of developments in the Madras Presidency and outside called for new dynamic leadership,

the professional elite had rapidly become so politicized that it was able to lead the battle for enlarged political rights for the subject peoples.

4. The Politicization of the Professional Elite

A new school of critics had then [1883] sprung up in Madras. A new journal to voice the opinions and aspirations of the Indian community had come into existence. To attack the foibles of the older men, some of whom assiduously paid pujah to officials, sometimes at the sacrifice of great interests, was the aim of the new party..

C. Karunakara Menon¹

THE VOICE OF THE PROFESSIONAL ELITE

It is somewhat ironical, in view of the sharp antagonism which developed between the administrative and professional elites during the 1880s, that the immediate reason for the starting of the "new journal"--the *Hindu*--in 1878 was the controversy surrounding Muthusamy Iyer's elevation to a judgeship at the Madras High Court. Even before the appointment was formally announced in July 1878, opposition to it was voiced in the columns of the local press. Except for the *Madras Times*, which under William Digby's editorship* had expressed

* W. Digby (1849-1904), editor of the *Madras Times* between 1877-79, was an active participant in

"great satisfaction" with Muthusamy Iyer's appointment,² the other Anglo-Indian organs in Madras were unanimously critical. The *Madras Mail*, the mouth-piece of the European-dominated Madras Chamber of Commerce, claimed that the choice of Muthusamy Iyer was a concession to Indian agitation for greater participation in the government. At the same time, it objected to Indians in such high positions being paid the same emoluments as Europeans. It felt that as a rule "native officials should not draw the same rate of pay as Europeans in similar circumstances" and urged the government to introduce differential pay scales in such instances.³ These views found support in the *Athenaeum and Daily News*, the other Anglo-Indian daily in South India. While expressing regret over the appointment, this paper cast doubt on the ability of an Indian judge to try certain types of suits that might come up before the High Court. "In some of these cases especially those relating to matrimony," argued the editor of the *Athenaeum and Daily News*, "it would be most difficult for a native judge to enter into the feelings and motives of the European parties before him."⁴

Even more extreme were the sentiments ventilated in the correspondence columns of these Anglo-Indian newspapers. "Subordination to a Brahmin," wrote an irate European correspondent, "is an outrage which makes the blood boil in the veins of a European."⁵

If Anglo-Indian hostility to Muthusamy Iyer's appointment was not entirely unexpected, what was surprising to some contemporary observers was the opposition emanating from certain sections of Hindu

local public movements and is best remembered for his services in the famine relief operations in 1878-79 for which he was awarded a C.I.E. In later years he was to be closely associated with the British Committee of the Indian National Congress. *Hindu, Weekly Edition*, 29 September 1904.

opinion in Madras. In a letter published by the *Madras Mail*, a "Sudra correspondent" contested official claims about Muthusamy Iyer's knowledge of Hindu law and customs. The correspondent claimed that the judge only moved within the restricted circle of his Brahmin relatives and friends and had little actual knowledge or experience of the habits and ways of the rest of the Hindu community. Doubts were also raised as to the wisdom of conferring such high posts on Indians at this juncture. The correspondent argued that despite progress in Western education and other fields, Hindus were still too actuated by "caste feelings" to be expected to discharge their official responsibilities impartially.⁶

Another opponent of Muthusamy Iyer's elevation, styling himself "A Dravidian correspondent," contended that the Brahmin was "least fitted of all castes to deal fairly with the masses . . . since he considers himself as a god, and all others as Milechas." Moreover, the writer argued that since the Brahmins were holding over 70 per cent of public appointments it would be unwise to invest them with such high positions and thereby strengthen their position in the government vis-a-vis the other castes.⁷ These views found an echo in the *Madras Native Opinion*, the only Indian-owned newspaper in English in Madras. Its editor, an Indian Christian, was of the firm opinion that Indians had not sufficiently advanced, socially or otherwise, to assume the responsibilities of high office in the government.⁸

While the Madras authorities refused to be drawn into this controversy, it was evident that the Brahmins, especially the Western-educated section, resented the criticisms which had been levelled against Muthusamy Iyer's elevation to the High Court and the imputations cast on the community as a whole. The Brahmin reply came from the pen of G. Subramania Iyer, an Arts graduate then teaching in Pachaiyappa School. In a letter to the *Madras Times*, Subramania Iyer asserted that

Muthusamy Iyer's appointment had given rise to "much unjust and invidious criticism." He regarded the question of differential pay scales for European and Indian officials as "a grave question" but dissented from the stand taken by the editor of the *Madras Mail*. "When two officials whose duties are attended with the same responsibility and difficulty are unequally paid," he argued, "one who is underpaid is sure to murmur and grow discontented; and this will grievously tell upon the efficiency with which he is expected to discharge his duties."

However, for reasons of economy, he favored a reduction in the pay of Indian officials so long as this was accompanied simultaneously by steps transferring to Indians certain positions so far held exclusively by Europeans. Subramania Iyer believed that such posts as assistant collectors and district judges could be safely transferred to Indian hands, and, if the pay structure was revised, then it would mean a considerable saving to the treasury.⁹

Turning to criticisms of the Brahmins in the public service, he felt that it had "become the fashion to cry down Brahmins." He agreed that as a class the Brahmins were the "objects of envy" because of their progress in education and their predominance in the public service where they were challenging even the primacy of the Europeans. As for corruption and abuse in the public service, Subramania Iyer contended that this was not confined to the Brahmins alone. He attributed such practices to officials who lacked a superior Western education, many of whom were found in the subordinate executive and police service. He felt that progress in education would not only produce a superior quality of civil servants but also bring about a more equitable distribution of public appointments to all classes, non-Brahmins included. He also denied that there was an absence of mutual sympathy between Brahmins and non-Brahmins:

What an enormous change has come over the

social fabric of the Hindus, and how their caste antipathies are being levelled down into harmony, ever since the dawn of English influence in this country, are quite beyond the comprehension of these [European] gentlemen. To say that the educated Brahmans hate Sudras, and that they consider it a sin to touch them, is no more true of the modern state of society in India, than to say that the Druids in England still continue to burn human beings before their mistletoe God under the oak tree, is true of the modern state of society in England.¹⁰

Subramania Iyer's disquisition, while seeking to defuse any possible eruption of caste antagonisms in South India, was also an adroit attempt at appealing to the essential unity of interest which the Western-educated class as a whole shared. By singling out this class from the rest of the Indian community and by stressing the changes that its educational training had wrought on its attitudes and social values, Subramania Iyer was clearly advertising the credentials of this class for a favored treatment in government recruitment. Like other members of the professional elite, he believed that the Western-educated Indian was a superior being, had imbibed new virtues and values, and possessed the qualifications and ability for high office. He felt that this class should assert its just claims to the ruling authorities and defeat any insidious attempt to stir up old caste animosities which might endanger the growing fellow feeling which this class as a whole had come to share.

In the context of the times, Subramania Iyer's appeal was also a protest against the lack of organized political activity in South India. Much of the subcontinent at this juncture was in the grip of a severe famine. In the Madras Presidency, two out of every three districts were drought stricken since 1876, and the final death toll after two

years reached four million.¹¹ While the country was in the depth of this crisis, the Government of India seemed to be pursuing policies out of tune with the exigencies of the moment, particularly the grand celebration marking the Queen's assumption of the Throne of India in 1876 and the sparking off of conflict with Afghanistan a year later. Equally unpopular with the Western-educated class was the reduction of the age of entry into the Covenanted Civil Service in 1876 and the enactment of the Vernacular Press Act and Arms Act two years later. For these actions Lord Lytton was held largely responsible and he became the target of hostile criticism throughout India. However, in Madras, unlike Calcutta or Bombay, there was no concerted action to mobilize opposition to Lytton's policies, owing to the absence of any "medium through which the energies of the educated Indian could be focused and by which the masses of the population could be educated." There was no voluntary association or newspaper which could consistently voice the interests of the Indian people as a whole.¹² It was an inadequacy which the professional elite began to experience during the time of Lytton's controversial viceroyalty, and the controversy over Muthusamy Iyer's appointment merely heightened this feeling.

As the need for some kind of concerted action began to be felt, leaders in Madras began to float a number of schemes both in the press and on the platform. One school of opinion advocated the formation of a political organization to represent the interests of South India. Among the exponents of this idea was William Digby, the popular editor of the *Madras Times*. In March 1877, when he first broached this subject, Digby called for a broad-based, noncommunal organization embracing both Europeans and Indians.¹³ When this appeal brought no response, he modified his scheme and suggested a purely Indian body along the lines of the Poona Sarvajanik Sabha.¹⁴ This proposal accorded with the sentiments expressed by the *Madrassee* in April

1877 when it called upon "the educated natives scattered throughout the Presidency" to organize "a strong association to watch over and protect the interests of the people."¹⁵ Another school of thought in Madras believed that what was needed was a well-conducted newspaper to educate public opinion and thereby make its voice heard in the ruling circles. To this school belonged the "six ardent youths" who started the *Hindu* in September 1878. As one of them recounted many years later:¹⁶

We knew that public feeling, not only politically and morally, but socially, is influenced in all countries by the tone of their public journals, as the community is bound however unconsciously to imbibe the spirit of the newspaper which its members daily read; and realised the responsibility of the undertaking, and the immense evil that would be inflicted on the community if we failed to develop those qualities of political moral and social well-being which are so essential for the advancement of the nation.

The six who jointly launched the *Hindu* were G. Subramania Iyer, M. Viraraghava Chari, N. Subba Rao, T. T. Ranga Chari, P. V. Ranga Chari, and D. Kesava Rao Pant. They were all Brahmins, having just completed or being about to complete their collegiate education, and were eventually to branch off into one of the three independent professions, namely, law, teaching, or journalism. They were also members of the Triplicane Literary Society, founded some years ago as a forum for lectures and discussions among the younger sections of the Western-educated class in the metropolis.

The actual task of conducting the *Hindu* fell on the shoulders of Subramania Iyer and Viraraghava Chari. These two Brahmins came from families of relative poverty, and it was with some difficulty that they were able to complete their higher education. G. Subramania Iyer was born in 1855 in

Tanjore district, two years before Viraraghava Chari saw the light of day in Chingleput district. Their paths merged in 1874 when they came to Madras to join the Government Normal School in Saidapet. In the following year they passed out as teachers, and while Viraraghava Chari enrolled in the Presidency College to read for an Arts degree, Subramania Iyer became a teacher while at the same time reading for his degree part-time. When they graduated, they taught in Pachaiyappa School while continuing as prominent members of the Triplicane Literary Society.¹⁷ In starting the *Hindu* they were not only cementing a developing friendship but were also finding a calling in which they could harness their individual talents in the cause of realizing their political ambitions.

In the first issue the editorial policy of the *Hindu* was clearly defined by G. Subramania Iyer. He stressed at the outset that he and his friends had embarked on this enterprize with "great diffidence," conscious as they were of past journalistic failures. However, he contended that the great changes that had taken place in India had encouraged them to believe that there was scope as well as necessity for a fresh attempt in this direction. While lamenting the absence of organized public opinion in South India, Subramania Iyer asserted that the *Hindu* was aspiring to fill this lacuna by not only giving expression to public opinion but also modifying and molding it according to events and circumstances. The paper was to be devoted to Indian subjects which were to be discussed on the principle of "fairness and justice." At the same time, the *Hindu* would endeavor "to promote harmony and union" among the Indian people and "interpret correctly the feelings of the natives and to create mutual confidence between the governed and the governors."¹⁸

The general reaction to this journalistic venture was at best a mixed one. The appearance of the *Hindu* went unnoticed in the Anglo-Indian press in Madras. Among the Western-educated Indians

there was skepticism about the ability of these young graduates, without journalistic training, capital resources, and with a limited grasp of public questions, to manage as exacting and responsible a job as a weekly newspaper. While on the one hand many well-wishers agreed with the need for such a newspaper, they did not try to disguise their inner misgivings. In the words of Viraraghava Chari:¹⁹

Oh! I well remember the various letters of encouragement and congratulation that came from all parts of India. I should, however, not omit to mention the discouraging remarks of some of our well-wishers who foresaw many evil consequences from the enterprise; they considered that the profession of a journalist was hazardous in the extreme, and that in the then condition of the Presidency could not financially pay its way. The fate of the "Native Public Opinion" and the "Madrassee" was predicted for "The Hindu." But nothing daunted, we continued to work on.

The fact that the *Hindu* survived and prospered despite these early forebodings was in no small measure due to Subramania Iyer and Viraraghava Chari. In a partnership extending over two decades, they blended their talents to subserve the long-term interests of the paper.* Subramania Iyer took sole charge of the editorial responsibilities. Gifted with a fluent if pungent style, he gave expression to the ideals, aspirations, and fears of the professional elite then emerging on the

* W. S. Blunt, a British M.P. who interviewed Subramania Iyer and Viraraghava Chari in November 1883, found them "intelligent, clear-headed men, contrasting by no means unfavourably with men of their profession in London." Blunt, *India Under Ripon*, p. 36.

political scene of South India. His honesty and courage, which were reflected in his editorial writings, earned the *Hindu* the reputation of being "a sober, vigilant and honest critic of men and measures."²⁰ Viraraghava Chari, for his part, managed the business side of the newspaper. Since he was known for his "tact, energy, and business ability,"²¹ it fell on him to arrange for the publication of the paper, secure advertisements, and seek ways and means of boosting circulation. He established wide contacts with the members of the Western-educated class and often appealed to their sense of patriotism to mobilize support for the newspaper.

The *Hindu* was also fortunate in attracting assistance from various and unexpected quarters. The editor of the defunct *Madrassee*, A. Ramachandra Iyer, was of "immense help" in freely offering his advice and the benefit of his experience in conducting a newspaper. He also introduced a certain Surgeon-Major Nicholson to Subramania Iyer and Viraraghava Chari. It was this retired official who instructed the editor and his colleague in the complexities of bringing out a newspaper while at the same time he sent regularly "valuable contributions on various topics."²² Also important was the help rendered by the "journalistic fraternity" which Subramania Iyer had slowly built up in order to secure a more comprehensive coverage of news in South India. This fraternity, consisting of his old college friends or well-known public figures in the *mofussil*, submitted at regular intervals reports and newsletters of happenings in their towns and districts.²³ Stress was laid on the activities of the professional elite, and such events as the formation of literary societies, proceedings of public meetings, and municipal and district board elections received prominent mention. At the same time, a close watch was kept on the activities of officials, both Indians and Europeans, and acts of misdemeanor and highhandedness were promptly reported. As these contributors remained anonymous,

they were able to comment on any local occurrence without fear of possible reprisals.

The question of solvency, which bedevilled all Indian journalistic ventures during the nineteenth century, did not spare the *Hindu*. None of the six who had founded the paper had any capital, and, as those with wealth were not prepared to invest in the paper, Subramania Iyer and Viraraghava Chari had to turn to the aid of generous and patriotic fellow Hindus from time to time. Among those who generously assisted the *Hindu* to find a secure footing were officials like Raghunatha Rao, lawyers like P. Ananda Charlu, S. Subramania Iyer, and P. Rangiah Naidu, industrialists like A. Sabapathy Mudaliar, merchants like S. Savalay Ramasamy Mudaliar, and members of the landed aristocracy, notably, the Maharajah of Vizianagram and the Raja of Ramnad. It was largely due to the generosity of S. Subramania Iyer that the *Hindu* acquired its own press in 1883, called the "National Press."

About this time the *Hindu* also shifted to its newly-rented premises at 100 Mount Road, which was soon to become the nerve center of political activity in South India. In the words of Viraraghava Chari, the *Hindu* Office "used to be visited by members of Parliament who happened to visit Madras; there it was that the Mahajana Sabha met and transacted business for a long time. It was to 100, Mount Road, that people with grievances reported. . . . Memorials and pamphlets in the thousands on the questions of the day were printed and circulated at the time from 'The Hindu' Office."²⁴

During its early years, at least until it became a tri-weekly in 1883, the *Hindu* was in reality an opinion sheet rather than a newspaper. Its content was heavily political, with hard news clearly occupying a secondary place. In its proclaimed role as the tribune of the people, it discussed political, economic, and social issues of immediate and long-term significance to the Madras Presidency. Founded as it was at the height of the

famine, the *Hindu* showed an obvious concern for the problems of the peasant class. It called for urgent and radical measures to prevent such disasters, advocating particularly the reduction in assessment and more liberal tax remissions during times of natural disasters.²⁵ Here, the editor of the *Hindu* saw himself as the guardian of the interests of the masses, who, ignorant and docile as they were, needed some kind of a protective shield to safeguard their well-being from being threatened by an omnipotent bureaucracy.

If its role as the tribune of the masses was somewhat unreal, the *Hindu* was undisguisedly the voice of the professional elite in South India. Here, the format of the paper bore the heavy imprint of its editor, Subramania Iyer. During his unbroken tenure of twenty years, he came to be widely acknowledged as "the father of South Indian Journalism."²⁶ This distinction was conferred on him not merely for his success in transforming what began as a precarious weekly periodical into a successful daily but also for making the *Hindu* a recognized social institution of the Presidency, both helping to shape as well as being a vehicle of elite thinking. To Subramania Iyer, the former was the more important function of his paper, as he once said:²⁷

The Indian Press is not representative of mature public opinion. To represent mature public opinion is only a subordinate function of it, because public opinion has no constitutional or regular channel of making itself felt in the Councils of the Empire. Its more serious and important function, is to form public opinion, and to direct it along the channels of public utility and public improvement; and this peculiarity of the Indian Press was most particularly felt at the time when the *Hindu* was started.

It was this educative function which Subramania Iyer held as most important, even sacrosanct, in his

role as the editor of the *Hindu*. In his editorial writings, he argued rationally and with moderation that political regeneration of the Indians depended on their readiness to make the necessary sacrifices, in terms of time, energy, and wealth, and in their ability to reform their social institutions in the light of the values which Western rule had introduced in the country.

His message was primarily directed at the professional elite which he believed should be in the vanguard of all political and social movements. He often reminded this elite group that, as beneficiaries of a superior education, it had special responsibilities in stimulating orderly change and providing enlightened leadership to the tradition-bound Indian masses. Where there was apathy or selfishness in the ranks of the professional elite, Subramania Iyer was merciless in his criticisms. Not surprisingly, he acquired a reputation, even among his friends, of "harshness and undue severity of judgement and action." To those who took exception to his editorial severity, he was said to have retorted: "I place the highest value on national progress . . . I want to impress on my countrymen, high and low, that, whenever any man's career or conduct runs counter to national interest, he can expect no mercy from us, however high he may be."²⁸ He deliberately kept his social distance from officials, lest friendship circumscribe his editorial freedom or warp his judgment. He urged the professional elite to do the same, in order that it might develop the habits of self-reliance and independence of thought and action.²⁹

In the history of Indian newspapers this was very much the era of personal journalism. Like editors elsewhere in the country, Subramania Iyer sought to mold society through strongly expressed editorial opinion, to sustain the interest of his readers by starting appropriate political and social crusades, and to ensure the stability of the paper by building up circulation on the basis of a personal following. Although sobriety was regarded

as a virtue, the *Hindu* was not expected to be always neutral on nonpartisan. Subramania Iyer wished the paper to be controversial, even dramatize issues and situations, in order to involve its readers, and to display a spirit of independence, even if it meant courting official disapproval.

A measure of the editor's success was reflected in the growing popularity of the *Hindu*. By 1885 it had the second, largest readership in South India, and was challenging the entrenched position of the Anglo-Indian dailies. It was "the favourite paper of the Vakils and native officials throughout the Presidency" and was being read in almost every reading room and literary society in the Madras Presidency.³⁰ Equally important was its acceptance as the authoritative organ of the professional elite. The latter's continued patronage of the *Hindu*, the readiness of its members to subsidize its operations, and their willingness to subscribe to the political beliefs expounded in the paper, especially during the troubled times of the early 1880s, were ample evidence that the credentials of the *Hindu* were wholly accepted by the professional elite. For this, the editor had to be thankful for the events that occurred at this time, notably, the administrative blunders of the Grant Duff Administration in South India and the organized European onslaught on Lord Ripon's liberal policies. Helped by the ferment caused by these events, the *Hindu* successfully galvanized the professional elite into concerted political action.

"THE GRANT DUFFIAN ERA"

In the summer of 1881 the Gladstone Ministry announced the appointment of Mountstuart Elphinstone Grant Duff as Governor of the Madras Presidency. This announcement, coming in the wake of the Liberal Party's electoral triumph of the previous year and so soon after Lord Ripon's assumption of the viceroyalty of India, was greeted by Indian

politicians in Madras as "the dawn of a new epoch in the administration of the country." There was a general belief, especially among the ranks of the professional elite, that these high-level appointments represented a repudiation of the military and domestic policies associated with the Lytton regime. The discerning members of the Triplicane Literary Society, in a message of welcome to Grant Duff, were already testifying that Ripon's measures had "won back public confidence"; they expected the new governor to reinforce the viceroy's policies by formulating "various measures of reform in the internal administration of the country calculated to promote the prosperity, freedom, and contentment of the people."³¹

No doubt, "the antecedents" of Grant Duff served to heighten these expectations. Being the son of the illustrious historian of the Mahrattas, a prominent member of the Liberal Party, and for five years an Under-Secretary of State at the India Office during the previous Gladstone Ministry, Grant Duff's reputation had travelled ahead of him to his Indian principality. The *Hindu*'s welcoming remark of the new governor reflected the mood of the Indian politicians in South India: "His antecedents have roused the sanguine expectations of the Native community, and his arrival is very conspicuous."³²

While welcoming the new governor, no time was lost in spelling out the pressing problems that awaited his attention. The effects of the famine of 1876-78 had been gradually erased by the relatively good harvests that followed immediately the years of drought. However, complete recovery was not expected yet, and there were hopes that the new administration would accelerate the process by initiating fundamental changes in the existing revenue policy. The Triplicane Literary Society, in its address to the governor, charged that the shortsighted policies of the Madras authorities had resulted in the "growing impoverishment of the agricultural class" in the Presidency. It alleged that

the authorities were only interested in augmenting revenue and had consequently enhanced the assessment at every fresh settlement, imposed new cesses, and had collected taxes with "unusual rigidity." In urging a new policy, the society advocated "fixity of tenure, consolidation of the several assessments, reduction of assessments wherever necessary," and proper maintenance of irrigation works. Also, concern was expressed at the lack of supervision of the "ill-paid subordinates" in the revenue line. It was claimed that the activities of the latter had led to "complete demoralization" of the cultivators of South India.³³

Indicative of the kind of official harassment was an incident which for some months prior to Grant Duff's arrival was achieving a certain notoriety in the press as "the Chingleput Scandal." The district of Chingleput, situated at the "back-door" of Madras, was famous in earlier times as the resort of Hindu pilgrims and the center of a flourishing weaving industry. However, by the latter half of the nineteenth century, much of its past splendor had vanished and, although it still continued to function as a popular temple city, its weaving industry was almost completely extinguished by machine-produced goods from Manchester. Agriculture became the mainstay of the district, but inferior soils and the rack-renting practices of absentee *mirsadars* denied the "pauper sub-tenant" of any initiative to maximize production.³⁴ To aggravate matters, the district was a frequent victim of seasonal vagaries, and during the nineteenth century it was afflicted by severe famines on no less than five occasions. In these circumstances, the cultivators in the district constantly defaulted in paying their assessments and revenue officials were often compelled to resort to "coercive process by distress and sale" to realize the dues.³⁵

Indeed, the Chingleput Scandal had its origins in the decision of the *tahsildar* of Conjeeveram taluk, Seethapathy Naidu, to attach the holdings of

certain Brahmin ryots living in Vadagaput village for their failure to pay their dues on time. The ryots alleged that the attachment was illegal, as they had still a week to clear their arrears, and asserted that the *tahsildar* had acted in retaliation of their refusal to pay a bribe.³⁶ Failing to get any redress from the local officials, the ryots petitioned the Madras Government which ordered a local inquiry. The inquiry turned out to be a protracted affair, over 250 ryots were summoned to give evidence, and ultimately the *tahsildar* was cleared. The aggrieved ryots protested that the inquiry was not impartially conducted, while those who did not answer the summonses to give evidence were arrested and sentenced to varying terms of imprisonment.³⁷

It was at this juncture that Grant Duff assumed the reins of office. The Madras press, which had become critical of the manner in which the Chingleput case was being handled, appealed to the new governor to institute an impartial inquiry to get at the truth of the complaint. The *Madras Mail*, for example, urged Grant Duff to "shake himself clear of his surroundings," especially the civil service.³⁸ Early in December 1881, a small deputation of ryots from Chingleput called on the governor to lay their grievances in person.³⁹ However, Grant Duff was not prepared to intervene personally in this case and instead allowed the Board of Revenue to handle this complaint in the normal way. The latter accepted the results of the local inquiry and called for the rigorous punishment of those who had brought false charges against the *tahsildar*. Among those who were charged was a village *munsif* who had submitted an adverse report on Seethapathy Naidu. Dismissed from office, the *munsif* was subsequently arrested on charges of giving false evidence and sentenced to eighteen months rigorous imprisonment.

Some sections of opinion in Madras were outraged by these actions of the officials and rapidly lost patience with Grant Duff's "passive policy."

The *Madras Mail* renewed its appeal to the governor to intervene and "nip evil in the bud" rather than facing "serious embarrassments" later.⁴⁰ The editor of the *Hindu* was critical of the governor's handling of the issue, and asserted that his inaction had allowed the affair "to branch off into episodes, each sufficient to cast dirt on the fair face of British justice."⁴¹ In January 1882, despairing of securing any justice from the Grant Duff Administration, a group of six prominent Indian leaders in Madras, including G. Subramania Iyer and R. Balaji Rao,* launched the "Chingleput Ryots Relief Fund," aimed at raising funds to meet the trial expenses of those *ryots* who were already sustaining heavy losses owing to their enforced absence from their farms.⁴² The contributions, deposited with the *Hindu* office, reached the total of Rs 900 by March 1882.⁴³

In May 1882 the Chingleput case took a new turn when the *tahsildar* filed a charge of giving false evidence against another *ryot*, B. Rangasamy Iyengar. Unfortunately for Seethapathy Naidu, his former superiors had left the district on transfer, and his case was heard by the new sub-collector Arthur F. Cox. In his inquiry, Cox found enough evidence in the village accounts to entertain serious doubts as to the legality of the *tahsildar*'s original attachment in May 1881. He discovered "a singular array of irregularities" in the village records and improper attachments in the case of certain *ryots*. Satisfied that there were reasonable grounds to accept the *ryots'* testimony, he

* R. Balaji Rao (1842-1896) was born in Tanjore district and had his early education in Kumbaconam before migrating to Madras where he read law. He was enrolled as *vakil* in the High Court in 1870 and soon acquired a considerable practice. An active public figure, he served for several years as an elected member of the Madras Municipality. *Hindu*, 3 February 1896.

acquitted Rangasamy Iyengar and drafted a report to the Board of Revenue in which he questioned the legality of Seethapathy Naidu's attachment of May 1881.⁴⁴ A few days later, the report disappeared without a trace, and suspicion fell on the *tahsildar*. Pending investigations, Cox decided to suspend Seethapathy Naidu from duty. Hearing the news the latter took flight, and a warrant was issued for his arrest. The trial for theft of the documents was heard in July 1882, and Seethapathy Naidu was found guilty and sentenced to two years' rigorous imprisonment. This curious episode, by now "*a cause celebre*," came to an end in May 1883 when the Madras Government remitted the rest of his sentence and ordered his release.⁴⁵

To students of South Indian history, the Chingleput affair will always remain something of an enigma. Was the *tahsildar* a victim of a conspiracy to unseat him or was he guilty of indiscretion? The district officials took the former view, at least until Cox made his disclosures. The professional elite, judging by the sentiments of the *Hindu*, took the side of the *ryots*, although it was prepared to welcome an independent inquiry along the lines suggested by some of the European newspapers. In the long term, the significance of this episode lay in the way it affected relations between the professional elite and the Grant Duff Administration. The latter's handling of the affair drove the first wedge between the two and dissipated the grandiose hopes which the Indians had entertained about the new governor.

An event which stirred even stronger passions in South India was the communal violence which flared up in Salem town in July-August 1882. The seeds of Hindu-Muslim tension in this town were sown in 1878 when the Muslims erected a mosque in "a conspicuous part" that had long been "a pathway of all the Hindu processions." The Hindus, resenting the enforcement of the official ban on music, appealed to the High Court to exercise a right that they had enjoyed "from time immemorial." The High

Court ruled in their favor and ordered the local magistrate to fix hours when Hindu processions could pass the mosque with music. Undecided between official regulations and the High Court ruling, and showing neither firmness nor tact in mediating between the opposing factions, the Salem officials lost control over a rapidly deteriorating communal situation. When serious rioting broke out in August 1882 for a second time within a month, the local authorities watched helplessly while an angry Hindu mob proceeded to destroy the mosque.⁴⁶

The Madras Government, convinced that the Salem outrage was a symptom of "the rising spirit of religious intolerance and lawlessness" in South India, ordered a full-scale inquiry to bring the rioters to book. Lewis McIver, Head Assistant to the collector of Nellore, was selected to lead the inquiry, supported by "the best detectives" that the Inspector-General of Police could furnish.⁴⁷ Investigations began promptly, followed shortly by a steady stream of arrests.

The trials began in September under Herbert Wigram, Additional Sessions Judge of Coimbatore. In all, twenty-four "ring-leaders" were charged "with abetting the destruction of the Shevapett Mosque, and, in so doing, with abetting the commission of culpable homicide." McIver, the counsel for the prosecution, contended that the accused had organized "a Hindu League" with the avowed purpose of waging a crusade against the Muslims. He claimed that they had hatched a conspiracy to destroy the mosque, raised funds from all Hindus, and recruited gangs from neighboring villages to carry out their design. On the day of the event, said McIver, "the whole adult male Hindu population, augmented by contingents from out villages, turned out as a man, armed, and animated by a common purpose: that purpose being an attack on the persons and property of Mussulmans." He also claimed that there was an "absence of all warning before the event."⁴⁸

The judge, while acquitting the accused of abetment to murder, found fifteen Hindus guilty of abetting the destruction of the mosque. One was sentenced to transportation for life, and the rest to varying periods of transportation and fines. Besides, many others were convicted on lesser charges and total convictions, after some were quashed by the High Court, stood at 154, of whom one was a Muslim and the rest Hindus.⁴⁹

Retributive punishment did not end there. The Madras Government moved swiftly in dealing with those officials suspected of complicity or withholding information about the riots. Eight officials in the revenue line, including a *tahsildar* and a *huzur sheristadar*, were dismissed and fifteen of their colleagues were either demoted or transferred out of the district. Dismissals from the police force, for "neglect and treachery," numbered fifteen while twenty-two others were demoted.⁵⁰ Nor were inhabitants of Salem who had helped the rioters spared. A special levy was imposed on twelve villages for the purpose of maintaining a "Punitive Police Force" in the district.⁵¹ In May 1883 the Madras Government dismissed three elected Hindu municipal commissioners for their part in the Salem riots. In its report to the Secretary of State, the Grant Duff Administration asserted that it had punished the Salem rioters with "the utmost rigour of the law."⁵²

The professional elite viewed these official proceedings with some degree of dismay, if not alarm. The official thesis that the riots were the result of a deep-laid conspiracy was received with skepticism, even by the Anglo-Indian press. The *Hindu* believed that there had been a miscarriage of justice. It claimed that the innocent had been punished and the guilty had escaped. At the same time, it criticized the official assumption that the Hindus were the culpable party, and as such they should be punished with severity. The *Hindu* also contended that the local officials must take some of the blame for the breakdown of law and order but

was dismayed that the Grant Duff Administration instead of censuring them had commended their work:

The worst enemies of England in India are such weak and incompetent administrators--those, who by tyrannical and arbitrary acts give room for the belief that those European officials who delight in the oppression of the people do so under the previous assurance of impunity and protection from Government. The Hindus will never forget the Salem Riots and they will continue to bitterly hate those Englishmen who were the cause of the most severe and unjust punishment of so many of their respectable and honoured countrymen.⁵³

Much of this bitterness was directed against the Collector of Salem, C. D. Maclean. He had emerged as the most controversial figure of this entire episode, and sections of the local press held him largely responsible for the unfortunate events which occurred in Salem in July-August 1882. In May 1883 the *Hindu* even published a letter from a correspondent who alleged that Maclean was at the Bangalore races when the first riots broke out in July and not on "kacheri business" as he claimed. While challenging Maclean to controvert this charge, the editor of the paper urged the Madras Government "to wash off the stain of their past deeds" rather than standing on "the false idea of dignity and prestige."⁵⁴ Such pleas evoked no response from the Grant Duff Administration. Equally devoid of immediate result were the appeals which many literary societies and local associations made to Lord Ripon when he visited South India in January 1884.

Although Ripon's refusal to intervene was a blow to Hindu hopes, the agitation for the release of the Salem prisoners continued to gain momentum in the ensuing months. In February 1884 the *Athenaeum and Daily News* published a semiofficial letter from McIver to a member of the Madras

Executive Council in which he urged the government "to use every legitimate weapon" in its power to uphold the Salem judgment. Writing at a time when appeals of certain convicted Hindus were before the High Court, McIver alleged that a section of the Bar, the High Court, and the local press were all seeking to overturn the Salem sentences. Proclaiming the dictum that "it is attack that generally wins," he wanted the Government Pleader to be roused to fight against any acquittals.⁵⁵ This letter caused a sensation in Madras and in some circles it gave credence to the suspicion that "the gentlemen employed by the Government to enquire into the case of the riots, one and all seem to have been animated by the desire, not to administer justice, but to get convictions."⁵⁶

In May 1884 C. Vijiaraghava Chari sued the Madras Government for wrongful dismissal from the Salem Municipality a year previously. Born in 1852 to an orthodox Sri-Vaishnava Brahmin family in Chingleput district, Vijiaraghava Chari had taken his B.A. at the Presidency College and had become a teacher in Bangalore and then in Salem. But finding little scope for his talents in this profession, he switched to law and built up a successful practice in Salem. Like many other members of the professional elite, he decided to devote some of his energies and time to politics. He was mainly instrumental in the formation of the Salem Mahajana Sabha in 1881, and in the following year, he together with seven other members of this body, contested and captured all the elective seats in the Salem Municipality.

After the August riots, Vijiaraghava Chari was among those convicted of conspiring to destroy the mosque and was sentenced to ten years' transportation. On appeal, the High Court quashed the conviction and ordered his release. His dismissal from the Municipality compelled him to renew his encounter with the authorities. The latter contended that they had powers for such action without explanation or justification, but the High Court rejected

this contention and awarded Vijiaghava Chari damages of Rs 100 and costs.⁵⁷

Heartened by this success, Vijiaghava Chari then decided to vindicate the innocence of his imprisoned compatriots by impugning the evidence given by certain witnesses during the Salem trials. The Madras Government opposed his application, only to be overruled by the High Court. The perjury trial was heard in Coimbatore in July 1884, and seven of the nine accused were found guilty and sentenced to imprisonment. The District Judge, in his summing up, attributed their perjury in part to "the undue influence of the Police and Subordinate officials."⁵⁸ By this time, with the confidence in the Salem trials severely undermined, public clamor for the release of those still in prison in the Andamans gained greater force and conviction. Almost every shade of public opinion in Madras, including some sections of the Muslim press, came to believe that there was some miscarriage of justice and urged a review of the sentences in the light of recent revelations. With mounting political agitation, some of which emanated from outside the Presidency, and sustained pressure from Lord Ripon, the Madras Government eventually agreed to the release of all prisoners in October 1884, thus bringing to an end an issue which had convulsed South Indian politics for more than two years.

The unpopularity of the Grant Duff Administration did not however stem solely from its mis-handling of the Chingleput Scandal and the Salem Riots. A further cause of its unpopularity was its legislative program, notably, the salt, forest, and *kudimaramat* bills. Some of these enactments, though accepted as desirable in principle by the professional elite, aroused opposition because their implementation was harsh.

The Forest Act of 1882 was a case in point. It was inspired by the need to arrest the almost alarming denudation of forests that was taking place in South India as a result of growth in human and cattle population. The Act invested forest

officials with powers to set the limits of forest reservation, arrest offenders, and seize cattle straying into reservations.⁵⁹ It was inevitable that the implementation of this measure would create friction in the rural areas where the villagers, from the powerful landlord to the manial ryot, had long enjoyed customary rights to fuel and pasture. The situation was aggravated by the overzealous way in which the forest officials discharged their duties, especially enclosing common lands and impounding cattle grazing in the reservations. Not surprisingly, there were protests everywhere that the enforcement of the Forest Act was "needlessly violent."⁶⁰ Equally widespread was the opposition to the Salt Act of 1882. There had been a long history of Indian agitation against the official salt policy, directed partly against the arbitrary price fixing of the government and partly against the state's claim to monopoly of production. The latter had led to the formation of a separate Salt Department in Madras in 1878 aimed at stamping out illicit manufacture of salt and the guarding of the salt pans and other saliferous areas.⁶¹ Under pressure from this department, the Grant Duff Administration had agreed to tighten the salt laws which allowed officials to search houses without warrants, arrest and detain suspects, and demand from magistrates more stringent penalties for offenders.

Neither the reorganization of the Salt Department nor the tightening of the laws was popular. The former meant that certain districts, especially in the Telugu areas, would for the first time feel the impact of the government salt monopoly. The provisions of the Act of 1882 also raised the fear of official abuse of power, especially by the lowly-paid Indian subordinates seeking self-enrichment. Nor was the professional elite happy with the new law. In an age when it anticipated enlightened policies, this legislation seemed to be illiberal both in conception and execution. Not surprisingly, when Ripon visited Madras in January 1884, almost every address that was presented to him alluded to

the severity of the salt laws and the hardships which the common folk underwent as a consequence.⁶²

A measure that was neither liberal in conception nor carrying a conviction of necessity was the Kudimaramat Bill. Prompted by the suggestion of the Indian Famine Commission to revive "the custom of statute labour" to repair neglected irrigation works, the Grant Duff Administration drafted a Bill which provided for the recruitment of unpaid labor to repair bunds that were breached and clear vegetation and silt blocking sluices and channels of tanks. The right to commute labor in money payment was recognized, but the Bill disallowed any intervention by the civil courts in disputes arising out of its working.⁶³

When the Bill was made public in May 1883, protests were heard from the press and political associations in South India. The recently-resuscitated Madras Native Association, in a memorial to the government, argued that the measure was "altogether unsuited to the altered condition of the time," if not "absolutely repugnant" to enlightened opinion. It claimed that, as the ryots were already paying their share of taxation, it would be unfair to impose an additional burden in the shape of kudimaramat, which would "demoralise as well as impoverish them."⁶⁴ The agitation against the Bill was intensified when Ripon visited South India, and the latter persuaded Grant Duff "to let the Kudimaramat Bill sleep."⁶⁵ In discussing the abandonment of this measure, the editor of the *Madras Mail* observed:⁶⁶

A seven months child, it produced many pains of gestation; it was born without a back-bone; . . . it died unregretted. . . . In a word it was smothered in child-bed by the heaps of addresses presented to the Viceroy.

By the early months of 1884, there was a general consensus of opinion in South India that Grant Duff, far from fulfilling the great expectations

that were entertained of him at his arrival, was a decided failure. The *Madras Times* commented editorially that since Grant Duff's arrival there had prevailed in the Presidency "a discontent which had become more and more profound."⁶⁷ Another European daily, in a postmortem into the governor's unpopularity, argued that Grant Duff had made the error of identifying himself too closely with European officials instead of observing "an attentive and sympathetic neutrality in questions that have forced Europeans and natives into hostile camps." Though convinced of his ability, the paper felt that the governor had "yet to come out of his shell, and make himself directly and easily accessible to representatives not of the governing as much as the governed classes."⁶⁸ The Indian-owned press attributed Grant Duff's unpopularity to his desertion of his liberal creed. The *Hindu* noted that, after two years of Grant Duff's rule, it found it difficult to reconcile his policies to the doctrines of his political party:⁶⁹

All that philosophical radicalism, the maxims of democracy, of representative government, in fact of good government itself, are all good to European people; but to the semi-civilised races of India paternal despotism is the only good government possible. On this conviction he [Grant Duff] has ever endeavoured to uphold the measures of individual European officers, especially the executive, and has shown utter contempt for public feeling. .

The breach between the governor and the vocal sections of opinion in South India was almost complete. Dissatisfaction with the Grant Duff Administration had led to unceasing agitation and even personal attacks on the governor in which the organs of the professional elite played a prominent part. The political consequences of such agitation were far-reaching. On the one hand, the credibility of the government was damaged almost

irreparably. As crisis after crisis confronted the Grant Duff Administration, it was found to be lacking imagination and resoluteness in tackling them. Moreover, the handling of the Salem riots had cast doubts about the evenhandedness of British justice. The *Hindu* complained that while the rioters were punished with "uncommon severity," no action was taken against European officials who were guilty of "serious offences against public morality." In the eyes of this paper, the Grant Duff Administration was "a singularly weak Government, distinguished neither for administrative ability nor regard for the requirements of honest public service."⁷⁰

RIPON'S REFORMS AND INDIAN DEMONSTRATIONS

Although Ripon and Grant Duff shared much in common in public life, notably, a long attachment to the Liberal Party and a deep interest in Indian affairs, it is difficult to conceive, based on their actions in India, of two men of such contrasting attitudes and temperament. If Grant Duff believed that Western liberalism had no place in India and that the country should be ruled by a despotic government,* Ripon held the view that changes brought about by British rule called for modifications in the authoritarian structure of the Indian government. If Grant Duff was "all for a soothing cautious nay even dull policy of peace & public

* Grant Duff wrote privately to A. C. Lyall: "We imagine that we can govern here on the principles which are recognized as best for Western societies--Call them Liberal principles or what you will--forgetting that our being here at all is if this country were a fit theatre for these excellent principles an usurpation & atrocity." *Lyall Collection*, MSS. Eur. F.132, Grant Duff to Lyall, 19 June 1884. I am indebted to Mr. E. Chew for this quotation.

works," Ripon boldly advocated changes to bring the administration "into harmony with the extended education, the free public discussion, and the growing public opinion" which British rule had steadily fostered in India.⁷¹

In particular, Ripon stressed the importance of recognizing the emergence of the Western-educated class on the Indian scene. He argued that unless this class was provided with outlets for its talents and political aspirations, unless it was given a share in the administration of the country, it would become alienated from the British Raj.

It is not that I want to please these men: it is that I want to make them useful citizens instead of discontented and hostile agitators; it is because I believe that to rely upon force alone to keep down the aspirations and curb the ambitions of men like these is to trust to a reed which will break under our hand; and that if we do not, by timely foresight, take steps to supply legitimate outlets for those aspirations in a manner consistent with the maintenance of our authority, we shall find in a few short years that we have raised up a power we cannot control.⁷²

Grant Duff, on the other hand, remained largely unimpressed by such arguments. He believed that the Western-educated class--"the small clique of wire-pullers in the Presidency & some of the big Towns"--exerted "little influence" over the masses in India who only wanted "quite sensible things, bridges, roads, railways & so on."⁷³

While Grant Duff was incurring the wrath of many in South India by his excessive reliance on the bureaucracy, Ripon was clearly intent on being his own master and began to undo some of the measures associated with his predecessor. In the first two years of his viceroyalty, Ripon ended the war with Afghanistan, repealed the Vernacular Press Act, reduced the duty on salt, and resisted the

efforts of the British Government to burden India with the charges of the Egyptian campaign. These actions of the Viceroy won applause of the enlightened section of the Indian population, and a feeling of euphoria began to grip the Western-educated class. The days of Lyttonian repression were regarded as things of the past, and nothing fortified this new mood more forcefully than Ripon's celebrated resolution on local self-government of May 1882.

Ever since his arrival, Ripon had given considerable thought to the question of utilizing the talents and energies of the growing Western-educated class. Local government provided one obvious field where he believed a start could be made without endangering the stability of the British Raj. But more importantly, the viceroy's liberal instincts demanded that his subjects ought to be instructed in the art of self-rule. Ripon believed that it was the duty of the British rulers "to raise the people of the country politically and socially, and not to merely content ourselves with providing them with the good administration of a benevolent despotism."⁷⁴ Not surprisingly, the Indian Government's resolution of May 1882 stressed that what was sought in the reform of local institutions was not administrative efficiency but "political and popular education" and the development among the people of "a capacity for self-help in respect of all matters." Executive interference was to be kept minimal, and wherever possible elected representatives were to tax themselves and undertake local works and improvements. It was not expected that in a country of such diversity that a uniform system of local institutions could be evolved; rather the institutions were to be adapted to the peculiar wants of every locality. To achieve this, provincial governments were urged to initiate the widest possible consultation with nonofficial opinion before finalizing the details of local government.⁷⁵

Ripon was aware from previous experience that

such experiments were popularly regarded more as an exercise in shifting financial burdens to local authority than in transferring political power. However, the language in which the resolution was couched, and the viceroy's popularity in Indian circles, helped to erase this impression and even generate some enthusiasm from the members of the professional elite. The Triplicane Literary Society claimed that the resolution of May 1882 was received with "a general demonstration of joy and gratitude," and it was confident that there was "a willingness to take the utmost advantage" of this concession.⁷⁶ Even more rapturous was the comment of the *Hindu Reformer and Politician*: "A new era of political independence has dawned on India and the harbinger of good news is the Government of India Resolution on Local Self-Government."⁷⁷ Doubtless, the favorable reaction of the Madras Government also helped to create an atmosphere of euphoria. Before making up its own mind over details, the Madras Government set up a mixed committee of officials and nonofficials to submit a report, while at the same time inviting the Madras Native Association to sound out public opinion in the Presidency.

The MNA prepared a detailed questionnaire, eliciting information on various aspects of local government, and circulated it widely to political associations, literary societies, and influential leaders throughout South India. At the same time, it sent G. Subramania Iyer on a tour to the Tamil districts to explain the significance of the resolution of May 1882 and rally support. Subramania Iyer's mission of July-August 1882 took him to Cuddalore, Chidambaram, Trichinopoly, Tanjore, Kumbaconam, Mayaveram, Negapatam, Madura, Tinnevelly, and Tuticorin. Local associations in these centers gave willing cooperation by convening public meetings to discuss the local self-government scheme, while others sent written replies to the MNA. On the basis of these submissions, the association drafted its proposals which were forwarded

to the Madras Government in December 1882.⁷⁸

Subramania Iyer's visit to the *mofussil* had a deeper significance than one of merely mobilizing public support for the resolution of May 1882. As the editor of the most influential Indian newspaper in the Presidency, and the rising star in the ranks of the professional elite, Subramania Iyer commanded a unique authority among political circles in South India. His visit to the *mofussil* towns excited interest among local leaders who were anxious to know his views on important public questions.

Subramania Iyer in his discussions and speeches explained the aims of Ripon's policies, and stressed the long-term implications of the local self-government scheme, particularly in laying "the foundation of the great future Representative Government" in India. He also emphasized that unless Indians demonstrated their ability to shoulder the responsibilities which these changes would thrust on them, unless leaders of high calibre and integrity would be willing to labor and sacrifice in the public cause, progress towards political enfranchisement would be a slow process.⁷⁹ At the same time, this visit enabled Subramania Iyer to meet local leaders and ascertain their reactions to public issues. In some centers, he was impressed by the enthusiasm that marked his visit. In Tanjore the meeting to discuss local self-government was widely publicized, with notices stuck in all parts of the town, and the large crowd which attended the meeting included lawyers, officials, merchants, and municipal commissioners.⁸⁰

The issue of local self-government also provided the more astute leaders of the professional elite with an opportunity to stimulate political activity in the Presidency. By convening public meetings and by skillful propaganda in the press, a concerted effort was made to get local leaders in the *mofussil* to take a more active interest in the political issues of the day. The attempt was not entirely unsuccessful. According to the *Hindu*,

within a year of the publication of the resolution of May 1882 "nearly a thousand public meetings have been held all over the country, for one or other public object," while "a network of such [political] associations" had sprung into existence in South India. To the editor, this development was "a certain sign of the people's advancement in political knowledge."⁸¹

There was little doubt that the tempo of political activity had quickened considerably since the publication of the scheme for local self-government. Not long before, the province had been labelled "the benighted Presidency" on account of its political apathy. The *Hindu* admitted as late as January 1881 that there was in South India a "miserable apathy in studying and discussing public questions."⁸² But within two years a perceptible change had resulted: associations and societies sprouted in almost every town; public meetings were held in increasing frequency; and public opinion began to gain greater force and coherence.

The nerve-center of much of this activity was Madras, where a small but able band of leaders drawn from the ranks of the professional elite were giving direction to the growing, political ferment in the Presidency. G. Subramania Iyer's tour of the *mofussil* to mobilize support for local self-government was evidence of such direction, but more significant were the series of political demonstrations that were organized in Madras during the eventful months from April 1883 to January 1884.

Three important demonstrations were organized in this period and they all concerned Lord Ripon or some aspect of his policy. The first demonstration took place in April 1883 and its aim was to petition the Queen to extend Ripon's term of office by another five years. The idea probably originated in Poona, and Bombay led the way by holding a successful meeting in February 1883. It was about this time that Madras awoke to the idea and a small representative committee was formed to make the necessary preparations with Salem Ramaswamy

Mudaliar* as secretary. A man of tact and modesty, he had come into prominence when he became secretary of the resuscitated Madras Native Association in 1881. It fell on him largely to make all due arrangements. He sent out invitations to various associations in South India urging them to send delegates to the demonstration in the metropolis or else to hold simultaneous meetings in their respective centers. In Madras itself, steps were taken to give due publicity to the event. Almost a week before the meeting, "placards and small fly-leaves" in English, Telugu, and Tamil were freely distributed, while notices were "pasted on walls in the busiest centres of the city."⁸³

On the day of the meeting, Pachaiyappa Hall could barely accommodate all those who flocked to demonstrate their support for Lord Ripon. Among the prominent leaders from the metropolis were P. Somasundram Chetty, "the conservative veteran," whose connection with local politics went back to the 1850s when he was associated with the Madras Native Association; P. Rungiah Naidu, a Proficient of the Madras High School, who had preferred the legal profession to service with the government; P. Ananda Charlu,** G. Subramania Iyer, M. Viraraghava Chari, R. Balaji Rao, and Salem Ramaswamy

* Salem Ramaswamy Mudaliar (1852-1892) was born into a Vellalar *mittadar* family in Salem. His father, a respected *tahsildar*, had sent him early to Madras to pursue his education. After a distinguished academic career, taking his law degree in 1875, Salem Ramaswamy Mudaliar worked in the judicial service of the government for some years before establishing his own law practice in Madras. For further biographical details, see Paramaswaran Pillai, *Representative Men of South India*, pp. 167-79.

** Ananda Charlu was born in 1843 to a Brahmin family in Chittoor, North Arcot. He joined

Mudaliar. Also present at the meeting were delegates from Coimbatore and Negapatam, while other *mofussil* associations had sent telegrams and letters expressing sympathy with the movement.

The meeting endorsed three resolutions: that Ripon's rule had been "conspicuously marked by an earnest desire to promote the material, intellectual and political condition of the people of India"; that the many judicious reforms inaugurated since 1880 were "entirely in accordance with the policy laid down by the Imperial Majesty in her proclamation of 1858 of gradually raising the political status of the people of India and of abolishing distinctions and disabilities founded simply on considerations of race, creed or colour"; and lastly, that in order to enable Ripon "to carry out to completion the various measures of reform which he has with such statesmanlike foresight inaugurated," a memorial be sent to Queen Victoria asking for an extension of his viceroyalty.⁸⁴

The day after this event, the Triplicane Literary Society at a special meeting decided to celebrate the first anniversary of the publication of the resolution on local self-government by holding a similar demonstration in Madras. A sub-committee was formed, and "the public of Madras and of the Mofussil" was invited to participate.⁸⁵ The response, however, was not as encouraging as was hoped: no *mofussil* center was represented at this meeting, while leaders of the Muslim and Eurasian

Pachaiyappa School in Madras, and came under the influence of C. V. Ranganada Sastri, a close friend of his father. After taking his B.A. he taught for a few years before switching to law and soon built up a flourishing practice in Madras. Endowed with a strong physical constitution and an incisive mind, he was to feature in regional and national politics for almost three decades. M. Venkatarangaiya (ed.), *The Freedom Struggle in Andhra Pradesh*, I, (1800-1905) (Hyderabad, 1965), pp. 235-44.

communities also kept aloof. However, the occasion was observed by some leading towns in the *mofussil*, and resolutions were adopted supporting local self-government.⁸⁶ The demonstration in Madras was attended by the prominent leaders of the professional elite, notably, G. Subramania Iyer, Ananda Charlu, Salem Ramaswamy Mudaliar, and Viraraghava Chari.

Fittingly enough, G. Subramania Iyer was the main speaker on this occasion, as no one had done more to popularize local self-government in South India. While discussing the manifold benefits that had flowed from Ripon's farsighted scheme, he contended that it had "breathed a new life into the people" and fostered "a sense of union and responsibility." He went on to claim that even the village folk had begun to take an interest in the question, while nearly fifty associations had been formed in South India since the resolution was published-- associations which were "diffusing useful knowledge, inculcating correct views on public questions, [and] creating a wholesome habit of activity and public spirit." At the same time, he was confident that the scheme would revive the village system and provide a strong impetus "to the development of Municipal Government throughout the country, and the consequent advantages in the shape of education, public spirit and the elevation of moral tone, will be immense." Subramania Iyer felt that the seeds which Ripon had sowed would soon "acquire wider and wider development, gathering strength and permanence as it grows, and bringing to bear on the conduct of administration, the wholesome force of public opinion."⁸⁷

The success of these political demonstrations, organized in vindication of Ripon and his policies, doubtless reflected the popularity and esteem which the Viceroy commanded in Indian circles at this time. To an equal extent, however, these political displays also symbolized a concerted Indian reaction to the growing Anglo-Indian opposition to the Viceroy's reforms. Ripon's appointment had always been suspect in Anglo-Indian eyes, especially with

his conversion to Catholicism and his strong commitment to Gladstonian liberalism. Suspicion began to turn to hostility when the Viceroy began to dismantle his predecessor's policies, while his advocacy of local self-government raised the fearful prospect of political power being transferred to the despised "educated Babu."

What brought matters to a head was the promulgation of the so-called Ilbert Bill in February 1883, aimed at removing "the absolute race disqualification" of Indian judges in the *mofussil* trying Europeans on criminal charges.⁸⁸ This measure precipitated a political storm of an unprecedented scale. Starting from Bengal, where a demonstration was held in February under the aegis of lawyers, planters, and journalists, the latent forces of European discontent found a focus to rally together all sections of Anglo-Indian opinion to mount a fierce assault on the Viceroy and his reforms. An Anglo-Indian Defence Association was organized to spearhead the agitation as well as to collect funds to defray expenses of the campaign in India and England. In Madras, where European opposition to the Ilbert Bill was described as "deep, bitter, and enduring," a protest memorial was widely circulated for signatures in April 1883.⁸⁹

Although the Viceroy bore the brunt of Anglo-Indian wrath, part of this European anger was directed against the Indian people. Moderate Anglo-Indian opinion took the view that, as conquerors, the British could preserve their supremacy only by keeping certain crucial positions in European hands, even though it was conceded that this would render nugatory past pledges of equality of treatment to Indians in the administration. A more extreme school of European opinion argued with considerable vehemence that Indians, for reasons of heredity and environment, would never attain the degree of intellectual or moral capacity to deserve equal treatment with Europeans. Anglo-Indian superiority was justified on openly racialistic grounds, and in elaborating this thesis some Anglo-Indians indulged

in the free abuse of the Indian, his character, his morals, and his social habits.

Even more vehement was the attack on Ripon. In their strong hostility towards the Viceroy, the Anglo-Indians indulged in such tactics as boycotting his functions, openly insulting him in the streets, and even issuing threats of violence to his person.⁹⁰ What came to be called the "White Mutiny," the agitation against the Ilbert Bill, continued uninterrupted throughout 1883, actively encouraged by a body of European officials in high positions, and ultimately compelled the Indian authorities to agree to a compromise.

The professional elite, while not resorting to platform oratory for tactical reasons, waged a running propaganda battle with the Anglo-Indian critics of the Ilbert Bill through the columns of the press. The *Hindu*, as expected, provided the lead, with the vernacular press giving consistent support. From the outset, the *Hindu* assailed any suggestion of abandonment or compromise on this issue. It asserted that the principle embodied in the Ilbert Bill was so "simple and fundamental" as to permit no viable compromise.⁹¹ It dismissed European opposition as founded on racial arrogance and a jealousy of Indian advancement to a position of equality with the Anglo-Indian. It believed that to conciliate this lobby would not only be "unfortunate" but also would "lower the prestige of Government in the eyes of the people. . . . It will create a belief that the admitted interests of justice and good administration have been sacrificed to the selfish clamour of a few planters."⁹²

During this affair the proprietors of the *Hindu* announced in June 1883 their intention of converting the paper into a tri-weekly. They contended that the "organized attempts" to discredit Ripon's reforms had made it "more than ever necessary that the real feelings and wishes of the people should be correctly interpreted to the people of England."⁹³

However, when the vicissitudes of the Ilbert

Bill affair produced the Concordat in December 1883, an event hailed by an Anglo-Indian organ as "the surrender of the Viceroy and Mr. Ilbert to the Defence Association," there was the inevitable dismay among the Indian supporters of the measure. The *Hindu*, seeing that its campaign was largely in vain, described the amended Bill as a "mangled skeleton" and "a veritable apology for the proposed measure."⁹⁴ What was more painful was the decision of Ripon to initiate negotiations with the Anglo-Indian Defence Association to reach an agreed settlement. "That an irresponsible body of men," moaned the *Hindu*, "should dictate the policy of a civilised and responsible Government is without a parallel even in the history of this country." Ripon was charged with having introduced "Government by Compact." "There is no denying," observed the *Hindu*, "that a compact had been made, that a novelty had been introduced into the administration of this country."⁹⁵

Although immediate Indian reactions to the Concordat were almost everywhere hostile and even sharply critical of the way in which Ripon had handled the issue, there was an equal recognition of the dangers of any course of action on the Indian side which might be interpreted as disowning Ripon or his policies. The dilemma, as one Bombay leader saw it, was that while Indians must criticize the Concordat "openly and strongly," they must do so without embarrassing a government which had done "too much good to the country." Leaders in Bombay decided against protest demonstrations and instead suggested that the Indians should make known their views "in respectfully but emphatically worded memorials."⁹⁶ Leaders in other Indian centers generally accepted this line of action, and by the first week of January 1884, there were hopes in Bombay that their decision would assume "the shape of a national expression of confidence in Ld. Ripon's Government."⁹⁷

To the leaders of the professional elite, the announcement of the Viceroy's visit to South India

in late January 1884 provided a welcome opportunity to demonstrate their confidence in Lord Ripon and his policies and show to their Anglo-Indian counterparts that the Viceroy's popularity had in no way diminished as a result of the Concordat. The enthusiastic reception that had greeted Ripon during his recent visit to Calcutta and Allahabad set a precedent that the leaders in Madras wished to emulate.

A small committee drawn from the leaders of the professional elite was formed to initiate plans for Ripon's welcome,⁹⁸ and it was anxious that all shades of Indian opinion should cooperate to make the occasion fully representative of the Presidency. There was some speculation as to whether the administrative elite would join the celebrations, especially after the bitter controversy which had occurred over the reception to Carmichael a month before. However, to the relief of the leaders of the professional elite, their elders, as well as leaders of the Eurasian, Muslim, and Indian Christian communities, agreed to participate in the demonstration.

The meeting to make the final arrangements took place on 19 January. Attended by all the recognized leaders of Madras, and presided over by T. Madava Rao, this meeting decided to give the viceroy's party "a suitable reception at their landing" in the city and "a public entertainment" during their stay. It was also agreed that a deputation should present an address "setting forth the views and wishes of the native community, in regard to the general administration of the country." A large Ripon Reception Committee, with Ananda Charlu as secretary, was elected to make arrangements for the reception.⁹⁹

The idea of a grand demonstration to welcome the Viceroy found enthusiastic response both in the metropolis and in the *mofussil* towns. In Madras support for the cause came from the numerous literary and reading room societies, including the Triplicane Literary Society, Chintadripettra

Literary Association, and the City Union. More significant was the readiness of the *mofussil* towns to participate in the demonstration. Some, like Tanjore, decided to send a deputation to Madras. Others indicated their intention to celebrate the occasion in their respective towns or villages. The man who was chiefly instrumental in coordinating the entire celebration was Ananda Charlu. It fell on him, as secretary of the Ripon Reception Committee, to invite the various associations, raise funds to meet expenses, ensure that the *pandal* (or special tent) where the Viceroy would be received was completed in time, and arrange for the seating of the dignitaries. Much of this work had to be done in less than two weeks' notice, but Ananda Charlu succeeded with the help of a small band of volunteers. On the eve of the Viceroy's arrival, preparations were complete, and as one paper observed, Madras was "in a state of enthusiasm."¹⁰⁰

The Ripon demonstrations exceeded even the expectations of those who had organized them. Madras shed its habitual inertia and turned out in large numbers to welcome the viceroy, either by crowding the pier to see Ripon come ashore or by lining the decorated streets to cheer the viceroy's cavalcade as it passed on its way to Government House. Celebrations were also organized in almost every district, taking the form of street illuminations, erection of triumphal arches, acts of charity, or special temple services. A number of *mofussil* towns responded to the invitation of the Ripon Reception Committee by sending delegations to the metropolis. Only the Anglo-Indians kept aloof, although there were some notable exceptions. Indeed, as Grant Duff observed, Ripon was "as well received by the population as Vishnu himself could have been --probably better."¹⁰¹

The success of the Ripon demonstrations filled the leaders of the professional elite with a sense of achievement. The *Hindu*, which in the past five years had done more than any other organ to shake

South India from its political torpor, observed that the Ripon celebrations were "a marvellously enthusiastic and unanimous demonstration." In its view, these festivities "really signalised a new turn in the development of loyalty and political education among the people of India."¹⁰² A European daily, which had witnessed the occasion from the sidelines, remarked that the demonstrations were quite unprecedented and even spontaneous. As for the new ferment sweeping the Madras Presidency, the paper commented thus:¹⁰³

It is not connected with rupees, annas and pies; it does not arise from their having been fed and clothed. It is gratitude for an attempt to recognise the political right of natives to exercise such political functions as they shall be deemed fit or nearly fit to exercise. It shews that the natives do value political liberty and rights, and are, therefore, in some measure fit for them; that they are intensely grateful for even the attempt to treat them with respect and fairness, and that there is something of a national feeling, not springing, but sprung up, among them.

CHAPTER 5

5. Provincial Organization and Conferences

Amidst the fierce political controversies of the early 1880s, stimulated on the one hand by the unpopular actions of the Grant Duff Administration and on the other by the formidable Anglo-Indian opposition to Ripon's reforms, the cry was heard among various political groups in South India for a voluntary association to represent the interests of the presidency as a whole. The source of this demand can be largely traced to the professional elite, or more specifically to that small group of activists in Madras who had organized successive political demonstrations in 1883-84. As this embattled group found itself drawn increasingly into the vortex of the sharpening political conflicts of the time, the idea began to dawn in its mind that a cohesive organization, established on a representative basis and endowed with adequate financial resources, would be an invaluable auxiliary in any continuing struggle against the government or the European community.

The reasons why this idea began to take such a firm hold on the mind of the Indian politicians in Madras are not far to seek. Especially important in influencing their thinking was the European triumph in the Ilbert Bill campaign. This episode revealed, among other things, the effectiveness of organization and unity in securing group demands. The Indians realized that they too must organize if

they wanted to obtain their rights. In this respect, the Bengal and Bombay presidencies had shown the way by establishing their respective associations. The Indian Association in Calcutta and the Poona Sarvajanik Sabha had shown themselves to be capable of rallying under their banner elements sharing common interests in their regions. Madras Presidency, on the other hand, lacked such a political organization. It seemed only logical that steps should be taken to redress this deficiency. What gave a sense of urgency to such a move was the fact that politicians in the three presidencies were slowly awakening to the importance of all-India unity. If Indian national unity was to be seriously entertained, the formation of provincial organization in the three presidencies appeared to be an essential prerequisite.

THE DEMAND FOR A PROVINCIAL ORGANIZATION

The need for a voluntary association had been felt in South India ever since the MNA became defunct during the early 1860s. In 1862, for example, certain Hindu leaders in Madras were reported to have had consultations on starting a new political association, but these talks did not prove fruitful.¹ In the ensuing years, the idea continued to be canvassed in the press as well as on the platform, but it was not until 1872 that anything tangible happened. Then, amid the excitement caused by the enactment of the Brahmo Marriage Bill, the MNA was resuscitated.² However, this revival was short-lived, as little was heard afterwards of its existence.

The absence of a recognized vehicle of political expression in South India, and the disadvantages that stemmed from it, were sharply emphasized during the 1870s when the Indian Association in Calcutta was beginning to make an impact on the Indian political scene by its determined opposition to unpopular policies associated with Lord Lytton's

regime. The reduction of the age of entry into the Covenanted Civil Service in 1876, the enactment of the Vernacular Press Act in 1878, and the remission of the cotton duties a year later provided sufficiently provocative issues around which the Indian Association was able to mount an all-India agitation. Inevitably, South India was called upon to support the campaign. In January 1878, Surendranath Banerjea, a prominent member of the Indian Association who had been making extensive tours to various parts of the country, arrived in Madras to canvass support for the civil service agitation. His plea for a public meeting failed, and he had to be content with "a conference of leading men"³ which endorsed the resolutions of the Indian Association.* This was not the only expression of political apathy in Madras. Later in the year, when the Indian Association was directing a concerted agitation against the Vernacular Press Act, leaders in Madras refrained from registering any public protest against the measure.

If these larger, albeit all-India, issues caused little flutter in South India, the same cannot be said of the more specific local questions which were troubling the Presidency during this period. overshadowing all other problems was the famine of 1876-78, which not only called for massive state relief but also a measure of voluntary public service and charity. A large, representative Madras Famine Relief Committee, consisting of Indians and Europeans, had been set up in the metropolis and it functioned with reasonable efficiency with the help of branch committees established in different districts in the Presidency. Although suffering had been reduced and deaths minimized, it

* A belated public meeting was held in Madras on 30 January 1878 when a petition on the civil service issue was endorsed for submission to the British Parliament through the aegis of the Indian Association. *Madras Times*, 31 January 1878.

was glaringly apparent to discerning observers that a task of such magnitude and urgency had evoked so little independent initiative on the part of the Indians themselves. Some attributed this to the absence of a well-organized voluntary association in South India. William Digby, the energetic secretary of the Madras Famine Relief Committee, took this view in a speech he gave in March 1878. Impressed by the energy and imagination which the members of the Poona Sarvajanik Sabha had showed in combating famine in the Deccan, he urged his South Indian friends, with whom he had closely worked in famine relief, to organize a similar association to work for the welfare of the Presidency.⁴

What gave Digby's call a sense of urgency was the decision of the Madras Government to increase local taxation to carry out improvements in conservation and sanitation in the metropolis. Local taxation had always been unpopular among the Indians, not merely because of its financial burden but also because of the petty official exactions that accompanied its collection and the fact that it breached the traditional secrecy surrounding business operations of the mercantile and artisan classes. But despite opposition, by the 1870s, local taxation had been extended to almost every major town in South India and in Madras it had come to affect almost every section of the nonofficial class, from the indigent weavers to the wealthier merchant and professional classes. In April 1877, in spite of vigorous opposition from the chamber of commerce, press, municipal commissioners, and non-official members of the local Legislative Council, the Madras authorities decided to raise the tax on houses and landed property in Madras. The irate citizens of the metropolis called a public meeting to protest against the increase and called upon the Viceroy to veto the legislation.⁵ One Indian newspaper, the *Madrassee*, angered by the way the government had defied "the unanimous voice of the Madras citizens and the unanimous voice of the native members" of the Legislative Council, advocated the

formation of "an active and respectable association" which could agitate incessantly against official iniquities and seek redress from the highest British authorities, including Parliament.⁶

As the demand for a political organization became more insistent, some Hindus decided to revive the Madras Hindu Debating Society. Founded originally during the 1850s as a forum for lectures and debates, especially for the Hindu youth, this body had been defunct since the death of Venkataroylu Naidu in 1863. The decision to resuscitate it came from some Hindu merchants and officials, of whom V. Rajaratnam Mudaliar was the most prominent, while Digby was made its Patron.⁷ A month later, the name of the society was changed to the Southern Indian Association, and its newly-defined objectives revealed its overtly political character. The association pledged itself to consider political and social issues of the Indian community, while at the same time serving "as a medium between the Government and the non-official native community on all matters affecting its interest."⁸ However, the Southern Indian Association was short-lived disappearing from public view in the same mysterious way as other similar ventures over the past decade.

A more successful attempt at revival was that of the MNA. Informal discussions to reactivate this body for a second time had begun in 1877, but it took almost four years before the process of resuscitation was completed. Among those actively associated with its revival were C. V. Ranganada Sastri, who was elected as President, and Salem Ramaswamy Mudaliar, its Secretary. Ranganada Sastri died in July 1881, and the presidentship was assumed by V. Bhashyam Iyengar, a Sri-Vaishnava Brahmin, born into the well-known Vembakkam family to which also belonged V. Sadagopah Charlu and V. Rama Iyengar. After taking his B.A. degree from Presidency College in 1864, Bhashyam Iyengar had entered government service but abandoned it a few years later to become a lawyer. He acquired a

mastery of Hindu Law, especially the law relating to land tenures and inheritance, and built up a clientele around wealthy merchants and zamindars.⁹ By the eighties he had become the unchallenged leader of "the Native Bar" in South India, reputed to be earning annually Rs 100,000.¹⁰

The MNA threw open its membership to all Indians in the metropolis, both officials and non-officials, irrespective of caste or communal affiliations. A special effort, however, was made to recruit prominent public figures, notably, members of the Madras Legislative Council, officials in high positions, and the leading lawyers in the city. Social prestige, education, and wealth were the distinguishing characteristics of its members, and not surprisingly the MNA earned a reputation for political moderation and a conciliatory attitude towards the government. Its headquarters for some time was at Mylapore, the residential suburb of the leading Indian lawyers and officials in the city.¹¹ When its premises were shifted to Mount Road in December 1881, the association was reported to have within its ranks "many learned and influential native gentlemen" in the city.¹²

As a body aspiring to represent the political interests of the Indian community, the MNA held periodical meetings to discuss issues of local importance. Subjects, like the admission of qualified Indians into the higher ranks of the judicial and revenue service and the disestablishment of the English Church in India,¹³ were discussed with a view to persuading the authorities to adopt a more equitable policy.

Undeniably, it was in furthering the cause of local self-government that the MNA did signal service. By circulating questionnaires to various bodies and leaders, and by sending a delegate to tour the Tamil districts, the association not only equipped itself with a mass of useful data and opinion but also helped to dispel Indian reservations about Ripon's scheme. Its own memorandum on the subject was an exercise in moderation and sound

judgment. It suggested that the elective system should be adopted, except in the hilly and agency tracts, with the majority of members of municipalities and taluk boards elected on a territorial basis. Where seats were to be filled by nomination, the association was anxious that minorities and special interests should be fairly represented. As regards the choice of presidents and vice-presidents, the association recommended their election in the case of municipalities, while in the taluk boards the president was to be nominated and the vice-president elected.¹⁴

Another issue which attracted its attention was higher education. For some years before the appointment of the Education Commission in 1882, fears had been created in Indian circles that the government, under pressure from Christian missionaries and the European press, might feel compelled to withdraw entirely from higher education. Taking advantage of the hearings instituted by the Education Commission, the MNA presented a lengthy memorial in which it expressed the hope that "no reactionary policy will be adopted with regard to higher education which has produced such signal results." While accepting the transfer of high schools to private control, the association declared its opposition to any similar transfer of government colleges, notably, those in Madras, Kumbaconam, and Rajahmundry, on the ground that continued private financial support was uncertain. It was claimed that not only did wealthy *zamindars* show little interest in education, but Hindu charity had "generally taken a religious form." Moreover, the association felt that the government allocation for education was "an insignificant proportion" when compared to European countries, and the Indian authorities were urged to make greater provision for education by reducing expenditure in other fields.¹⁵

That the MNA continued to function in 1883 is certain, although less and less was heard of its activities as the year progressed. In part this

can be attributed to the failure of the association to keep pace with the changing political situation in South India. At a time of sharpening conflicts between the government and certain sections of Indian public opinion, the Association's efforts to maintain a moderate posture seemed to convey the impression of mendicancy, if not a fear of the government. Nor were its relations with the government always cordial. Since the early months of 1882, when the government came under mounting public criticism, relations between the Grant Duff Administration and the metropolitan politicians had become strained. This jeopardized continued official participation in political work, fearful as officials were of government reprisal, and the MNA with its sizable official element was particularly affected. The *Hindu* commented in November 1883: ". . . the Government has of late become so jealous of any public spirit among Native gentlemen that those who are anxious to stand well in the estimation of Government shrink from taking part in public movements."¹⁶ W. S. Blunt, who visited Madras at this time, drew a similar conclusion. "The natives in the public service," Blunt recorded in his diary, "are completely under the thumb of the Government, and unless they have means of their own dare not offend their English superiors."¹⁷

A body of different origin and political complexion was the Triplicane Literary Society. It is not clear when exactly this body was founded; probably it was the outgrowth of the Triplicane Native Literary Society started in 1868. It was at this time that literary societies, as one newspaper remarked, were "becoming the order of the day amongst educated natives" of South India.¹⁸ With the steady expansion of colleges and high schools, students in search of some form of intellectual and corporate activity had begun to organize literary societies, debating clubs, and reading rooms in the various centers of the Presidency. Often encouraged by their principals and teachers, students assumed management of these societies, invited

distinguished lecturers to address them, organized debates, and provided facilities for reading and even games. Though overtly political themes were avoided, there was nevertheless enough opportunity for a wide ranging discussion of topical issues. Many of these students, when their scholastic careers were over, continued their association with these societies; others founded new societies to cater to their special needs. In almost every town in South India, where there was a nucleus of educated Indians, there was a literary society, debating club, or a reading room. In 1886 at least a hundred such societies were strung over Madras Presidency with memberships ranging from ten to one hundred.¹⁹ Many of these societies existed precariously, often on fluctuating membership and uncertain incomes, but their importance should not be underestimated. They were not only a source of informed Indian opinion but also the nursery of the latter-day political leadership of South India.

Undeniably, the best known of these societies in the nineteenth century was the Triplicane Literary Society. It had been reorganized on a more efficient basis in 1874 by some graduates residing in what was claimed to be the intellectual heart of Madras. Triplicane, a congested suburb, was in effect the Muslim quarter of the city. However, a significant Hindu population had always lived here, close to Sri Parthasarathy temple, which, as one of the oldest and most sacred Hindu shrines in the metropolis, attracted a regular stream of pilgrims from various parts of the Presidency. In more recent years, with the location of the Presidency College and Senate building of the University of Madras along the Triplicane beach, college students and graduates had come to reside in this suburb, among them G. Subramania Iyer and Viraraghava Chari. It seems unlikely that either had a hand in the reorganization of the Triplicane Literary Society in 1874, but there is no doubt that they were soon to be among its most active members.

The society rented modest premises, subscribed to select newspapers and periodicals, and depended on benefactors and the government to supply books for its small library. Membership remained around seventy,²⁰ almost all graduates trained in such vocations as teaching, law and journalism. Officials were not excluded, and, indeed, some of the important positions in the society were filled by officials in the service of the Madras Government.

But there was no mistaking its real character: it was a society of young intellectuals of the sort then filling the ranks of the professional elite--persons who were known for their radical political orientation and organizational skill, attributes which were to make them the focus of political movements during the 1880s. In the *Hindu*, they had already found a vehicle to express their thoughts. The next stage in their political evolution was to establish a voluntary association.

For a time, however, they decided to operate within the framework of the Triplicane Literary Society. Its literary character was gradually discarded after 1880, and it increasingly assumed the outward forms of a voluntary association. Among those who had a hand in this change were Raghunatha Rao, Ananda Charlu, G. Subramania Iyer, and Viraraghava Chari, all holding important positions in society and becoming conspicuous in Madras for their work in journalism, politics, or social reform. They were delighted with the triumph of the liberals in the elections of 1880, had visions of a new epoch in India, and were anxious to play a creative role in enabling the rulers to frame the right policies. One way to achieve this was to submit regular memorials and addresses. In November 1881, for example, the Triplicane Literary Society presented an address of welcome to Grant Duff in which it urged the reduction of land assessments, encouragement of agricultural education, separation of revenue from judicial functions, improvement of the management of religious endowments by fresh legislation, and lessening of the rigors of salt

and forest laws.²¹ None of these demands were new, but in skillfully presenting them in a single document, the Triplicane Literary Society was obviously highlighting the kind of issues around which a concerted political agitation could be mounted.

The travails which South India experienced during the years of Grant Duff's governorship did not embarrass the Triplicane Literary Society in the same way that they affected the MNA. If anything, the former seemed to have gained in vigor during these turbulent times. Provided with a *raison d'etre* for its recently acquired political status, the Triplicane Literary Society emerged as a fearless critic of the government, advocating in the process greater restraints on the power of the bureaucracy. No doubt this feeling stemmed from the widely held view that the Chingleput Scandal and Salem Riots were the outcome of inadequate checks on the power of officials. In an address that it presented to Evelyn Baring, the retiring Finance Member, in December 1882, the Triplicane Literary Society concerned itself largely with the way in which the administration was functioning in South India. Not only were the administration's glaring anomalies exposed, but the Society also called for some system of appeals against the rulings of district officials, especially on revenue matters. Equally, the favorable reaction to Ripon's local self-government scheme, though partly inspired by the fact that it would provide "the means of imparting political education to the people," also stemmed from the belief that it would remove official interference in one area of government.²² These sentiments were undoubtedly an expression of the suspicions and distrust which the professional elite was beginning to show towards the Indian bureaucracy. As one author remarked in 1886, the bureaucracy was likened by "Young Madras" to "an immense vampire" which sat brooding over India and "draining her almost to her heart's blood during the last century and more."²³

It is difficult to be certain for how long and

to what extent the Triplicane Literary Society was able to fulfill the hope of its leaders that it function as a provincial organization along the lines of the Poona Sarvajanik Sabha. In certain circles, at least, it was being discounted, before long, as a serious alternative to a voluntary association capable of rallying together the various centers of political activity in the Presidency. The *Hindu*, which had access to the thoughts of the leaders of the Triplicane Literary Society, had since 1881 repeatedly called for a new organization which would be more representative of the Madras Presidency as a whole and prevent the dissipation of energy and time "in random and unorganised efforts often misdirected and abortive."²⁴ The editor was obviously alluding to the plethora of associations, societies, and clubs mushrooming in South India and working without any coherence or central direction. The political demonstrations which were staged in 1883 in defence of Lord Ripon and his policies were also an attempt on the part of the metropolitan politicians to supply an element of coherence which they felt was lacking in these literary societies and clubs. As G. Subramania Iyer explained at the first anniversary meeting of the publication of the Resolution on Local Self-Government, such demonstrations would stimulate provincial unity "by gathering in the metropolis leading Native gentlemen from all parts of the Presidency to discuss questions affecting the public weal, and by diffusing that patriotism and liberality of thought which are sure to result from the periodical contact, on public business, of men from the mofussil with their compatriots of the capital city."²⁵

Once this political insight was gained, it was only a short step to recognition that to lend unity and vigor to any continuing political agitation would demand the formation of a provincial organization that embraced the metropolis as well as the mofussil. In November 1883 the *Hindu* made a strong appeal for such an association "to watch the

administration of the districts and bring to light any failure of justice or grievance of the people to be forwarded to England." The editor asked whether the entire Presidency could not furnish a hundred men who would be willing to "lend their time, thought and money for such a purpose."²⁶ What gave this appeal an element of poignancy, and indeed urgency, were two events which occurred at this juncture and acted as a kind of a catalyst in bringing to a consummation the long-felt need for a Presidency-wide organization.

The first of these two events concerned the reception given to D. F. Carmichael in December 1883. The fierce controversy that broke out, while highlighting the cleavage between the administrative elite and its younger rivals, also brought to the surface the simmering discontent and ill-feeling which the latter had come to entertain towards Grant Duff and his close official advisors. In its opposition to the reception, the professional elite represented Carmichael as the key figure in the recent policies of the Grant Duff Administration. Carmichael's commissions and omissions were duly catalogued, including his declared opposition to the Ilbert Bill, his prominent part in enacting "the most illiberal and unpopular Madras Municipal Bill" of 1883,²⁷ and his failure to protect those who had suffered in the Chingleput Scandal and the Salem Riots. The *Hindu* remarked that Carmichael was "an object of the people's intense dislike." It protested in "unqualified language" against "the poojah" which the supporters of Carmichael were constantly offering to their official deities, pleaded with them against making "native demonstrations such cheap articles," and appealed to the people not to associate with what it termed "this odious movement."²⁸

The agitation was to no purpose. The reception took place with the usual pomp associated with such events, graced by the governor and attended by Europeans and Indians of wealth and social eminence. The anti-Carmichael faction watched the proceedings

with a mixture of scorn and anger. Although the presence of "the titled rajas and knights" was dismissed with derision, it was not possible to adopt the same attitude towards the participation of Raghunatha Rao, Bhashyam Iyengar, and other leaders connected with metropolitan politics. The Triplicane Literary Society had declared its opposition to the reception, but this did not restrain its President, Raghunatha Rao, from attending the function. It is not clear what attitude the MNA adopted, but its president and secretary found themselves in opposing camps. If any lesson was derived from this episode, it was that neither of these bodies had shown any capacity for united action. In their failure to command the loyalty of their prominent members to an agreed line of action, they had destroyed their credibility to be truly Presidency-wide organizations.

The other event which heightened the need for a provincial body was the European triumph in securing the compromise on the Ilbert Bill in December 1883. While many Indians regarded the Concordat with dismay as a case of the government's sacrificing the principle of racial equality on the altar of European supremacy, what was more alarming to many discerning Indians was the long-term implications of this event. The *Hindu*, which claimed that the Concordat had filled "every thinking mind with gloomy forebodings," was apprehensive as to what would happen if a weak Viceroy succeeded Ripon. It was obvious to the professional elite that henceforth the Anglo-Indians were a factor to be reckoned with in Indian politics. If their influence in the past was not always apparent, the Ilbert Bill had provided a foretaste of the kind of opposition which liberal Viceroys like Ripon must encounter in the future. With their wealth, their organizational skills, and their determination to defend the privileges which they had long enjoyed, the Anglo-Indian planters, lawyers, and merchants were regarded as a formidable element capable even of dictating official policies. No doubt some of

their power was derived from the fact that they enjoyed the support of British officials in India, the India Office in London, and influential sections of the press and ruling classes in England.

For the professional elite to combat the Europeans whom it regarded as "enemies of reform and progress,"²⁹ it was essential that the elite equip itself with the kind of weapons which the Anglo-Indians had so successfully brandished at the government. Agitation through the press alone, as the *Hindu* admitted, was inadequate. What was needed was organization. Lamenting the absence of voluntary associations, the *Hindu* asked: "Had such Associations existed, would not the united voice of two hundred millions of India's people drowned even the London Thunderer [*The Times*], and rendered it unavailing against Ilbert's Bill or any other useful reform in India?"³⁰

FORMATION OF THE MADRAS MAHAJANA SABHA

There is no record of when and where the decision was taken to organize a new provisional association. Like those who started the Indian National Congress, the leaders who were behind the formation of the Madras Mahajana Sabha had revealed nothing to the public until they published a prospectus of the proposed body in March 1884. Circumstantial evidence suggests that the actual decision to form a provincial association was taken sometime before Ripon visited Madras late in January 1884, although there was to be prior consultation with *mofussil* leaders before its formal launching to ensure that adequate support was forthcoming for the venture.

The inspiration and driving force behind this decision was that small band of metropolitan leaders who had organized the political demonstrations and had actively campaigned against the Carmichael reception, notably, G. Subramania Iyer, Ananda Charlu, Rangiah Naidu, Salem Ramaswamy Mudaliar,

Balaji Rao, and Viraraghava Chari. Balaji Rao was named Provisional Secretary of the new association and was entrusted with the task of ascertaining the reactions of local associations and leaders in the Presidency. He sent out letters to every association in which he explained the objects of the new venture and enquired whether support would be forthcoming.

However, the real task of mobilizing support for the new association was done during the Ripon demonstrations when over 100 politicians from the *mofussil* had arrived at the metropolis.³¹ Informal consultations took place, and Balaji Rao and his colleagues were able to explain in some detail what their proposed association intended to achieve. To some extent, their task was made easier by the very success of the Ripon demonstrations; in coming to the metropolis at considerable effort and expense, the *mofussil* leaders had shown that provincial unity was possible where common interest was at stake.

In the addresses these local delegations presented to the Viceroy, there was further proof of provincial unity. These addresses gave expression to "certain grievances felt by the whole country at large." Commenting on "a family resemblance" among the addresses, an Anglo-Indian daily observed that the Indians were "taking a leaf out of the Anglo-Indian book by organising in view to defence and self-support."³²

In March 1884, almost six weeks after Ripon's visit to Madras, the sponsors of the Madras Mahajana Sabha issued a prospectus formally announcing their decision to establish this body. Emphasis was laid on its nonofficial character, with membership to be thrown open to graduates, pleaders, *dubashes*, and landholders. The declared aim of this body was to "watch public interests and to take such steps to promote them from time to time." It was to hold regular public meetings, arrange for lectures, and issue tracts in the vernaculars of the Presidency. While seeking the cooperation of

all local associations in South India, the founders of the Madras Mahajana Sabha disavowed any interest in supplanting them with branch associations. All local bodies were to retain their individual identity and were to function in the fashion they had before. It was not clear from the prospectus what would be the rights or obligations of those associations affiliating, excepting their right to be represented in the deliberations of the parent body and their obligation to pay a certain sum as subscription.³³

The meeting to inaugurate the Madras Mahajana Sabha was held on 16 May 1884. Dominating the proceedings were G. Subramania Iyer, Viraraghava Chari, Ananda Charlu, Rangiah Naidu, Balaji Rao, and Salem Ramaswamy Mudaliar. Balaji Rao, while moving the main resolution, explained that his inquiries in recent months had satisfied him that there was wide support for the organization. In seconding the motion, Rangiah Naidu contended that the Madras Mahajana Sabha, unlike the Madras Native Association, would only have nonofficial members who would "represent fearlessly the wishes of the people." The objectives of the new body were defined at the meeting. Balaji Rao envisaged a dual function for the Madras Mahajana Sabha. First, it was "to bring before our rulers the views of the public, and to correctly represent to Government what our needs are and to suggest remedies." Second, it was to devise means "to improve the condition of the people." Rangiah Naidu, on the other hand, suggested that the association should establish ties "with institutions of a similar nature in sister-Presidencies."³⁴

One of the earliest tasks that faced the founders of the Madras Mahajana Sabha was to draft its rules. The constitution that was adopted in 1884 contained seventeen clauses, setting out in detail the objectives of the body and ways of attaining them, the composition and fees of membership, the strength and functions of the office bearers, and the mode of enlisting the cooperation of local

associations in South India. Membership was to be restricted to those above twenty-one years of age; those accepted into the association were to pay an annual subscription of not less than one rupee. The executive control of the body was to be vested in the hands of a Committee, elected annually, while each affiliated association had the right of nominating one member to sit in an ex officio capacity. This committee was empowered to "bring about the objects of the Sabha by means of memorials, deputations, public meetings and such other means as it deems fit." Provision was made for the quarterly meetings of the Madras Mahajana Sabha which would review the work done over the past three months.³⁵

The nucleus of the early leadership of this association came from that small band of metropolitan politicians who had so strongly resisted the unpopular policies of the Grant Duff Administration and opposed with equal vehemence the reception to Carmichael. Elected as the first President of the Madras Mahajana Sabha was Rangiah Naidu, and he continued to fill this office until his death in 1902. Balaji Rao, who had worked tirelessly in enlisting support from the *mofussil* associations, was chosen as one of the Vice-Presidents. The Joint Secretary positions were filled by Ananda Charlu and Viraraghava Chari, both of whom had been active participants in the recent political demonstrations and who for many years to come were to remain in the inner circle of Madras politics. Among those elected to serve in the Committee of the Madras Mahajana Sabha were G. Subramania Iyer and Salem Ramaswamy Mudaliar, two of the most dedicated young politicians of South India and two who had contributed their share in developing public opinion in the Presidency.

Unfortunately, no complete list of office holders of the Madras Mahajana Sabha for the first year of its existence has survived. However, Appendix 1 provides a list of those elected to the Committee of the Sabha for the year 1886-87. Despite

obvious gaps in the data provided in this table, it is still possible to draw certain conclusions about the leadership of the association.

First, it is clear that the majority of the leaders belonged to a relatively young generation, being born after 1840. The notable exceptions were Rangiah Naidu, Somasundram Chetty, and Sabapathy Mudaliar. These three leaders, men of wealth and social standing, had also shown strong sympathies for the causes associated with the younger politicians. Though these considerations must have weighed in their selection, there is no doubt that their age was also an important factor. The charge of youthful impetuosity, which the critics so often levelled against the professional elite, had to be countered by recruiting older, more mature politicians into the leadership of the Madras Mahajana Sabha. But this did not conceal the preponderance of the younger politicians, mostly in their twenties and thirties, who had grown up in the more tranquil times of the post-1858 era. These young leaders had no firsthand experience of the violence released during the conflagration of 1857-58, and not surprisingly, some European critics argued that this group could never fully appreciate the extent of British contributions to the prevailing stability and security in the subcontinent. Monier Williams made this point in 1878: "The longer we continue to hold the country, the more its condition before we took it in hand is forgotten. In those parts of the Madras Presidency which have been longest under our rule, the people, having had no personal experience of the evils which their fathers were delivered through our intervention, are unable to cherish due sense of gratitude towards us."³⁶

As might be expected, education played an important part in the selection of the leaders of the Madras Mahajana Sabha. No less than nineteen of the thirty-six Committee members of the Sabha had a university degree or its equivalent, and of these all but one of them belonged to one of the

independent professions--law, journalism, or medicine. This was a measure of the strength of the professional elite in South Indian politics at this time, and there is no doubt that it was this group which wielded decisive influence in the actual management of the Madras Mahajana Sabha. However, the professional elements saw the need to enlist the support of other influential groups in Madras. A strong contingent of merchants and *dubashes*, thirteen in all, was represented in the Committee of the Sabha. It was not expected that these merchants would exercise the same degree of power in the civic life of Madras that they had done during the middle of the century, but it was nonetheless widely recognized that their wealth and social status would add weight to any political movement in South India.

Prominent among the merchants who were elected into the Committee of the Madras Mahajana Sabha were P. Somasundram Chetty, A. Sabapathy Mudaliar, and P. S. Ramaswamy Mudaliar. Somasundram Chetty came from a wealthy merchant family in Madras. He had studied English privately under an European tutor, then entered the service of Arbuthnot & Co. as a *dubash*, and eventually returned to his family business. A successful businessman, he had always shown an interest in public affairs. In the early 1850s, he had joined the Hindu Reading Room and later became a member of the Madras Native Association.³⁷ Known to be "a strictly orthodox Hindu," Somasundram Chetty was noted as a man of "striking geniality and humour," which to some extent accounted for his popularity in Madras.³⁸

A. Sabapathy Mudaliar of Bellary was a self-made man. He had entered official service at a very subordinate position, but dissatisfied with this, he joined a European firm which opened his eyes to the prospects of a commercial and industrial career. Speculating intelligently and investing his profits shrewdly in cotton presses, spinning wheels, and sugar factories, Sabapathy Mudaliar emerged during the 1880s as one of the

most enterprising and wealthy men in South India.³⁹

Savalay Ramaswamy Mudaliar, a *dubash* in the firm Arbuthnot & Co., had acquired his fortunes through long and loyal service in this firm. A regular contributor to various charitable causes in Madras, he was reported to have spent over Rs 44,000 to feed starving people flocking into Madras during the famine of 1876-78.⁴⁰

Another characteristic of the leaders of the Madras Mahajana Sabha was the fact that most of them whose birthplace is known were *mofussil* born. A sizable number came originally from Tanjore district, while others were born in districts as widely dispersed as Malabar in the west, Madura in the south, and Bellary in the north. It was education that had brought them together. The leading educational institutions in Madras, notably, the Presidency College, not only commanded great prestige throughout South India but also offered professional courses, like law, which attracted many bright and ambitious students from the *mofussil*.

When their educational career ended, these students decided to settle in Madras, attracted among other things by professional prospects, by the comforts of urban living, and by the varied social and cultural life of the city. Lawyers in particular seemed to favor Madras, especially during the 1870s and early 1880s when the profession was lucrative and when Indian *vakils* were effectively challenging the dominant position of the European barristers. Some lawyers, however, had resisted the pull of Madras for many years only to succumb to it in the end. S. Subramania Iyer, for instance, had established his law practice in Madura, his native town, and he built up a rich clientele which was the envy of even the metropolitan lawyers. However, in 1884 he decided to shift his practice to Madras, ostensibly to facilitate his attendance at the meetings of the Madras Legislative Council.⁴¹ He never returned to Madura, except for professional or social reasons.

A breakdown of the communal groups represented

in the Committee of the Madras Mahajana Sabha shows that twenty were non-Brahmin Hindus, thirteen Brahmins, two Indian Christians and one Muslim. Judged in terms of population strength, the Brahmins were palpably over-represented. However, the idea of proportional communal representation seemed to have counted least among those who organized the Sabha. Greater importance was accorded to such considerations as the individual merit of those seeking office, their past contributions to public life, and the economic and social influence they wielded in the Presidency. Education was an important criterion, especially if those who had acquired it had entered an independent calling which would enable them to participate fully in political activity without fear of official reprisal.

A further point which deserves notice is the fact that a fair number of the leaders of the Madras Mahajana Sabha had served in statutory bodies, charitable organizations or literary societies and clubs. At least fifteen of the leaders were known to have served in a municipality or district board. Somasundram Chetty, for instance, had been a member of the Madras Municipality since the 1860s. Rangiah Naidu became a member of the Chingleput District Board in 1871 and later was elected to the Madras Municipality. Another long-serving member was S. Subramania Iyer. First elected to the Madura Municipality in 1870, he was its Vice-President in 1884. Sabapathy Mudaliar, who dominated the civic life of Bellany from the seventies onward, was Chairman of the Bellany Municipality in 1885.

Charitable organizations, like the Monegar Choultry and Pachaiyappa Charities, also drew on the services of these leaders. Somasundram Chetty was Chairman of Pachaiyappa Charities for many years and he was associated with the Monegar Choultry for a similar length of time. Balaji Rao became a Fellow of Madras University in 1877, while Savalay Ramaswamy Mudaliar had the distinction of being the first Indian to be appointed Sheriff of

Madras in 1886. Hence, many of the prominent members of the Madras Mahajana Sabha had a tradition of public service and they were known beyond their immediate circles of friends and relatives.

It is not possible, owing to lack of relevant data, to extend this analysis to those who became ordinary members of the Madras Mahajana Sabha. The framers of the constitution of this body had explicitly laid down that admission would be restricted to nonofficials only. The right of entry to non-officials was not automatic, no doubt reflecting the uncertainty of the organizers as to who should be welcomed into the association. When the prospectus of the body was published in March 1884, the sponsors went so far as to specify their preference for the proficient of the High School, the graduate of the university, the pleader of the district court, the *dubash* of the agency house, and members of the landed gentry. It was obvious that the association was to be essentially elitist in character, drawing its membership from the ranks of the professional elite and the wealthier classes in the region. However, when the constitution was finally adopted in May 1884, the restrictive clauses were generally discarded. Annual subscriptions were reduced from three to one rupee, while membership was thrown open to "any Native of more than 21," provided he was recommended by any two members.⁴²

In retaining the principle of recommendation in admitting members, the Madras Mahajana Sabha still had a built-in safeguard against any indiscriminate stampeding of its portals by unwanted elements. Although there is no actual evidence of any interest or social group being deliberately refused admission, there is no mistaking the fact that the Madras Mahajana Sabha remained an elitist body with a fairly small membership. In June 1885, a year after its formation, it had 205 members on its rolls.⁴³ By May 1886 the total had climbed to 796, aided largely by accessions from *mofussil* areas.⁴⁴ However, for the rest of the century, the membership figure remained almost static.

It would be wrong to measure the influence of the Madras Mahajana Sabha purely in terms of the number of members on its rolls. A truer index of its influence would be to assess the strength of its affiliated associations spread out over the various parts of the Presidency. The constitution of the Madras Mahajana Sabha had empowered its leaders to "affiliate with itself any other Association in Madras or in the mofussil aiming at the same object."⁴⁵ The obvious advantage of this scheme of affiliation was that it provided a formula for the central association to link itself with the numerous societies and clubs already functioning in South India. The alternative to this would be to set up branch associations, but this posed many difficulties, including the danger of stirring up an element of friction with the already existing associations. This was the kind of danger which the leaders of the Madras Mahajana Sabha were anxious to avoid, lest it threatened their aims of fostering the slowly developing sentiments of provincial unity. Hence, wherever possible, they opted for the affiliation scheme and stressed to the local leaders that affiliation with the central association would not necessarily impede the local leaders' freedom of pursuing their own objectives. However, where there were no local associations, the Committee of the Madras Mahajana Sabha had to take the initiative in organizing branch bodies, either by writing letters to local leaders or by sending one of its own members to visit the *mofussil* centre. Such efforts appear to have had a fair degree of success in the early years. By August 1888 a total of eighty-two local associations or branch bodies had come to be linked with the central body in Madras.⁴⁶ Almost every town in the Presidency could now boast of its own local association, and the Madras Mahajana Sabha provided the common thread linking them together.

The kind of ties which developed between the central association and its widely dispersed affiliates depended to some extent on the personality of

the "Corresponding Member." The latter was the link through whom the central leadership maintained liaison with the affiliated associations. It is not clear as to who chose the Corresponding Member or on what basis the selection was made. Presumably, the same considerations which influenced the selection of the Committee of the Madras Mahajana Sabha also determined the choice of the Corresponding Members. Education was an important factor: of the forty-two Corresponding Members selected for the year 1886-87, twenty-nine had a university degree or passed the pleadership examinations. Not surprisingly, the lawyers were the dominant occupational group: no less than twenty-four of the forty-two were lawyers practising in the *mofussil* courts. Of the remaining eighteen, four were teachers, two journalists, two merchants, one *zamindar*, while the vocations of the rest were not known.⁴⁷ Clearly, the professional elite was exercising the same decisive influence in *mofussil* politics as in the metropolis. Wherever a small nucleus of this group existed, it hastened to organize a political association, and link its fortunes with those of the Madras Mahajana Sabha.

More often than not, it was the most energetic and talented politician in the *mofussil* who was chosen as the Corresponding Member. Among those who served in this position in 1886-87 was C. Vijiaraghava Chari, "the Salem Patriot," whose legal battles to vindicate the innocence of the Salem prisoners had earned him an all-India reputation. In December 1881 he and a few other local leaders had organized the Salem Mahajana Sabha. However, with the outbreak of communal violence, the Salem Mahajana Sabha became dormant, but it was reactivated in the early months of 1884, when Vijiaraghava Chari led the fight for the release of the prisoners.

Another prominent name in the list of Corresponding Members was N. Subha Rao, representing Rajahmundry. He was one of the six young men who conceived the idea of starting the *Hindu*, but on

passing his law examinations he had decided to return to his native district where he established a lucrative practice. He was an active figure in local affairs, but it was his association with Viresalingam Pantalu in the widow remarriage movement which earned him more than a local renown.⁴⁸

Another well-known figure in *mofussil* politics was S. V. Subbarayudu, Corresponding Member of Masulipatam. A lawyer by profession, he was a member of the Local Fund Board and Municipality, and contributed generously to charities and public movements.⁴⁹

A man of similar stature in Tanjore district at this time was S. A. Saminatha Iyer. For many years he had been a Pleader in Negapatam, where he was a member of the Municipality, and helped in organizing the Native Association in 1882. Later, he moved to Kumbaconam, and in September 1885 was elected President of the Tanjore People's Association.⁵⁰

Dominating the political scene in Gooty, Anantapur district, was P. Kesava Pillay. A Pleader, he was involved in almost every public movement in the district, and at the time was an occasional correspondent of the *Hindu*.

Others who featured in this list of Corresponding Members included C. Jambulingam Mudaliar, a Pleader in Cuddalore, S. P. Narasimulu Naidu, editor of the Anglo-Vernacular paper called *Coimbatore Crescent*, K. Venkata Rao, Pleader in Bellary, Paul Peter Pillay, a teacher representing Srivilliputtur, Tinnevelly district, and C. Kunhi Raman Menon, editor of the *Kerala Patrika* of Calicut.

EARLY PROVINCIAL CONFERENCES

A significant innovation in the evolution of agitational techniques in South India was the decision of the Madras Mahajana Sabha to convene "a Conference of Gentlemen representing various parts of the Presidency" in order to bring about "a

periodical exchange of thoughts between Madras and the Mofussil.⁵¹ Unlike earlier associations in South India, whose activities were restricted to public meetings, deputations, lectures, and memorials, the Madras Mahajana Sabha took a new leaf out of the book of constitutional agitation by convening periodic conferences, attended by delegates from the affiliated associations in the Presidency, to formulate an agreed upon program for political action.

To some extent the very character of the Madras Mahajana Sabha demanded this new departure. Being an organization embracing a large number of disparate local associations, it could not easily frame a readily acceptable political program. The constitution of the Madras Mahajana Sabha had vested immediate responsibility for policy formation in the Committee which had some built-in provisions to guide it in its efforts to ascertain the feelings of the affiliated bodies before committing them to any line of policy or action. The appointment of Corresponding Members offered one channel of contact between the Committee and the scattered affiliates, while the right of the latter to nominate members to sit on the Committee furnished another means of contact and consultation. If the former was a rather tenuous link, the latter right was rarely invoked. Indeed, neither of these provisions afforded scope for a regular and systematic exchange of views between the central caucus and the affiliated associations.

It was partly an appreciation of these shortcomings that persuaded the Committee to convene a provincial conference in Madras in December 1884. All affiliated associations were notified in September. There was guarded optimism about the response to this invitation, especially since the Madras Fair was scheduled to take place at the same time.⁵² Moreover, the Christmas season witnessed the annual Convention of the Theosophical Society in Madras, and this event was bound to attract a number of influential *mofussil* leaders who were

also members of the Madras Mahajana Sabha.

The Conference, delayed slightly by the interruption of rail services, started on 29 December, attended by over seventy delegates. The great majority came from the *mofussil*, especially from the Tamil districts, notably Salem, Tanjore, Madura, Tinnevelly, and Chingleput. Also significant was the response from such remote Telugu centers as Bellary, Gooty, Anantapur, and Rajahmundry. The presence of three delegates from Bangalore also provoked interest, especially as affairs concerning the Indian States remained outside the scope of the gathering. Conspicuous by their absence were the west coast districts of Malabar and South Kanara, while the extreme northern districts of Vizagapatam and Ganjam also went unrepresented at the Conference.⁵³

The Conference was opened by the President of the Madras Mahajana Sabha, Rangiah Naidu, who gave a brief speech of welcome to the delegates present. Ananda Charlu, one of the two Joint Secretaries, then explained that the realization of the objectives of the central body necessitated "a free and frequent interchange of thought" between its affiliated members. He felt that such meetings permitted the leaders to participate in "the process of stock-taking and self-improvement," and at the same time to "enlighten the public with their knowledge and the result of their labours." Moreover, he believed that such gatherings were "a crying emergency" to prevent "a widespread misunderstanding" between the rulers and the ruled and between "the races making up the latter." If this "mere alienation of feeling" was allowed to take deep roots, Ananda Charlu feared that it might develop into "positive antipathy" and might have serious repercussions for the entire country.⁵⁴

Much of the Conference sessions was devoted to the reading of lengthy papers on the reform of the Indian legislative bodies, the separation of revenue from judicial functions, the condition of the agricultural masses in South India, and the

structure of the Indian Government and the changes desired.

Of particular interest to the professional elite was Viraraghava Chari's paper on "Indian legislation and Indian Legislative Councils." In recent years, this subject had attracted growing attention from the articulate section of the Indian community anxious to have a voice in the policy-making organs of their country. Viraraghava Chari gave expression to the disenchantment of his colleagues with the functioning of the legislatures. He argued that the Indian Councils Act of 1861 had only invested limited powers on the legislatures, while excessive executive interference had almost reduced them to "a simple Registration office where the projects of the Executive, however unpopular and ill-suited as regards time and place, are correctly copied and recorded and preserved." Another complaint was the imposition of undue restrictions on nonofficial members. Viraraghava Chari claimed that nonofficials had not been encouraged to voice their "independent and conscientious convictions," nor had they been nominated to the extent allowed under the provisions of the Act. Hence, he concluded that nonofficial opinion had not exercised the degree of influence in legislation anticipated in 1861. Also he attributed the "several undesirable laws" that had been enacted to the "sole and single circumstance that the Indian legislatures are not constituted so as to shed on them the light --the heavenly light--of popular opinion and local knowledge."

In calling for a fresh installment of constitutional reform, Viraraghava Chari alluded to the many changes that India had undergone since 1861. The Indians, he claimed, were "no longer a stationary people" and had "to a very great extent outgrown the conditions of the past." He believed that the Act of 1861 offered "little scope for improvement" and could not be adapted to the demands of a changed situation. The important change which he wanted to be incorporated in the future was the

recognition of the principle of popular representation. "No evil is likely to follow from such a course," he assured his audience, "but much strength to Government, as more confidence will be reposed in them by the people."⁵⁵

The Conference agreed in a resolution that the existing legislatures provided "little room for the successful expression of popular opinion and fail to command that degree of confidence which is so needful for their efficient working." It was also agreed that a draft scheme on the reform of the legislatures was to be prepared for submission to the government after adoption at the next provincial conference. The other resolution that was accepted related to the question of executive officers having magisterial functions. The delegates agreed that "the union of the revenue and magisterial functions in one and the same officer is productive of much evil and hardship, and that early measures should be adopted for their separation." The Conference spelled out the substance of a memorial which the Committee of the Madras Mahajana Sabha was to prepare for endorsement at the next gathering.⁵⁶

The main criticism that could be levelled against this Conference was the undue amount of time that was expended in discussing lengthy papers on fairly general themes rather than formulating clear-cut resolutions on more specific issues. It was argued in some circles that the Conference, instead of devoting its energies to all-India issues, should have discussed subjects of more immediate concern to the Presidency, notably, the question of local self-government and the operation of salt and forest laws.⁵⁷ Indeed, when the circular announcing the Conference was issued in September, both these latter issues had been listed in the agenda. While the question of salt and forest laws was touched upon in a general way by delegates discussing the condition of the agricultural classes, the subject of local self-government was entirely omitted without any explanation being offered.

Another surprising feature of the Conference was the omission of the civil service question. This issue had hung fire ever since the age of entry into the Covenanted Civil Service was reduced in 1876, and as late as March 1884 a deputation had waited on the Secretary of State seeking redress. But Lord Kimberley's blank refusal to restore the previous age limit gave rise to a renewed outburst of agitation in India, and in Madras the *Hindu* led an onslaught on the India Office which continued almost uninterrupted for four months. At one point, it attributed Kimberley's refusal to the "unjust and unfounded jealousy of the political advancement of the Natives," and warned that disregard of past pledges was causing "silent discontent throughout the country."⁵⁸ The Madras Mahajana Sabha decided to memorialize the Secretary of State on this question in October 1884. Expressing "deep regret and disappointment" over his refusal to raise the age limit, it contended that the reduction of 1876 had "practically shut out the natives of India from the Covenanted Civil Service."⁵⁹

If the India Office had hoped to neutralize the odium that it had incurred over the reduction of the age limit by creating the Statutory Civil Service, it must have been disappointed by the Indian reaction to the experiment. In South India, the government's insistence on adopting a system of nomination of candidates, giving priority to considerations of "birth, character, services of family," rendered the experiment unpopular, especially in the eyes of the professional elite. Fearing abuse of official patronage, it urged Ripon in January 1884 to replace the system of nomination by open competition. Ripon promised to revise the rules, but when he left the country he had only succeeded in suspending the old rules, which had in effect given provincial governments wide discretion in the selection of candidates.⁶⁰

Ripon's promise, not unnaturally, created the fallacious impression in the mind of the professional elite that the era of patronage had come to

an end. Hence, when the Madras Government selected three Statutory Civilians on the basis of "limited competition" in January 1885, there was a fresh outburst of protest. The Committee of the Madras Mahajana Sabha called upon the Indian Government to veto the nominations, contending that the examinations were neither wholly competitive nor the results adequately publicized. The process of selection, the Committee said, was "highly unpopular with the Native community" and would only discourage "able and intelligent candidates" from competing.⁶¹ Protests also came from other public bodies in the Presidency, including the Madras Graduates Association. The Government of India, while regretting that the Madras authorities had not fully explained their procedure of selecting candidates to the public, upheld the right of the local administration to devise whatever system it thought proper.⁶²

This reply did not satisfy the leaders of the Madras Mahajana Sabha who decided to carry their protest a stage higher by appealing directly to the Secretary of State. In a memorial to the India Council in August 1885, the Committee of the association spelled out in detail its views as to how the rules governing entry into the Statutory Civil Service might be rendered more equitable. The basic change that was advocated was to limit selections "compulsorily in the first instance" to those who had attained "eminence in Government service or in a learned profession." Only if these two sources of talent had been "earnestly searched and exhausted" was the government to turn elsewhere. Where the latter was necessary, the Committee of Madras Mahajana Sabha felt that the "competitive examination should be accepted as the sole and final test" in the selection, thereby minimizing "the chances of abuse of patronage and injustice to the public at large."⁶³

However, when the Committee met in September 1885 to draft the agenda for the second provincial conference to be held at the end of the year, the

civil service issue was again omitted. This gathering was committed to discuss two subjects which had been deferred at the last meeting, namely, the reform of the Indian legislatures and the separation of revenue from judicial functions. Besides, three other themes were listed in the agenda for discussion: the operation of forest and salt laws in South India, the establishment of an Arbitration Court, and the promotion of indigenous industries in the Presidency.⁶⁴ The inclusion of the latter themes was partly the outcome of recent developments. The constitution of the Bombay Forest Commission earlier in the year led to demands in the press for a similar inquiry in South India. The *Madras Times* had first put forward this suggestion and had urged the Madras Mahajana Sabha to undertake the task of collecting information and bringing to light "authentic cases of hardship" resulting from the operation of the forest laws. The proposal was welcomed by the *Hindu* which urged the Committee of the association to include the issue in the agenda of the forthcoming conference.⁶⁵ The Committee agreed, framed interrogatories on forest and salt laws, and circulated them to all its affiliated bodies.⁶⁶

The inclusion of this subject was welcomed by the affiliated associations. In many towns, the leaders of associations convened public meetings to explain the objectives of the provincial conference and to discuss the proposed agenda. At the same time, steps were also taken to gather data on the working of the forest and salt rules. In many instances, small teams were sent out into the rural areas to interview the ryots and ascertain on-the-spot the grievances of the villagers. In Coimbatore, for example, a deputation of six leaders, including Narasimulu Naidu, made an extensive tour of the villages in the district to collect data on the operation of forest laws. Most of the information that was gathered was forwarded to the office of the Madras Mahajana Sabha, while petitions and other written complaints also flowed in from

independent sources.⁶⁷

The second provincial conference assembled in Madras on 23, 24 and 25 December 1885. The *mofussil* was adequately represented, with twenty-one centers sending a total of forty-four delegates. Especially heartening to the organizers was the presence of large delegations from Gooty and Anantapur, while Tanjore district retained its reputation as the politically most advanced in the *mofussil* by sending the largest number of delegates. Although Ganjam was represented in this Conference, Vizagapatnam, Malabar, and South Kanara had sent no delegates.⁶⁸ A novel feature of the gathering was the presence of *ryots*. Both Coimbatore and Vellore had included a number of *ryots* in their deputations to give weight to the evidence which they had amassed about the forest and salt laws.⁶⁹

The opening day of the Conference, after introductory speeches from the President and Joint Secretary of the Madras Mahajana Sabha, was devoted entirely to the discussion of the two draft memorials that had been prepared on the reform of the Indian legislatures and the separation of revenue from judicial functions. The former memorial departed little from the proposals which Viraraghava Chari had made a year earlier. This document, endorsed by the Conference without any modification and forwarded to the Secretary of State, urged the introduction of the elective principle in the selection of nonofficials to the legislative councils.

One of the difficulties was the question of the electorate. It was at once conceded that universal franchise was not feasible, but it was believed that a start could be made with "a limited electorate, provided that such an electorate might be shown in its turn to have been formed on an elective basis." The obvious choices were the municipal and local boards, and it was claimed that these bodies could be converted into electorates on a territorial or population basis. Other institutions, like universities or chambers of commerce, if they had acquired "a fairly pronounced

representative status," were to be given seats in the provincial legislatures. The importance of minority representation was stressed and the scheme adopted called for representation of communal minorities in proportion to their numerical strength.

Increased powers were also to be invested in the legislative bodies, with elected members enjoying the right of interpellation "on matters of administration, finance and other vital topics."⁷⁰ One obvious gap in this scheme was the failure to specify the proportion of elective seats in the reformed legislatures. Another shortcoming was the ambiguity surrounding the reconstitution of the Supreme Legislative Council: the scheme approved by the Conference appeared to be concerned almost wholly with provincial legislatures.

The other memorial that was adopted at the Conference related to the separation of revenue from magisterial functions. There was some unhappiness among delegates over the government's refusal to consider this reform because of financial reasons. In deciding to petition the Indian Government, the Conference wanted to evolve a scheme which would show that the financial problem was "not such an insurmountable difficulty as is generally supposed." It was estimated that the reform would involve an additional outlay of Rs 50,000 per annum for the Madras authorities. To offset this new burden, the Conference suggested certain administrative adjustments to set free the necessary funds, namely, the amalgamation of Registration and Revenue departments, abolition of the post of Inspector-General of Registration, and dissolution of the District Court at Kurnool, as recommended by the Judicial Reorganization Committee.⁷¹ G. Subramania Iyer, in proposing the adoption of the scheme at the Conference, asserted that the proposed reform would end "a relic of barbarous times" and relieve the district collector from his multifarious duties and enable him to "acquaint himself with the feelings and wishes of the people."⁷²

The second and third days of the Conference were almost exclusively dominated by the controversial forest and salt questions. Emotion-charged speeches were heard at the Conference for the first time, emanating not only from *ryots* but also from delegates who had conducted an independent inquiry into the working of these laws. Paul Peter Pillay, speaking from "personal experience," accused forest officials of conniving with speculators "at the wanton and unfair denudation of trees for their illegal income." He contended that forests in *zamindari* areas, where these irksome laws did not exist, were "better controlled and managed."⁷³ Narasimulu Naidu, who had carried out a special inquiry into the working of the forest laws in Coimbatore district, asserted that the Forest Department was "a costly establishment, and the gain to Government nil." He described in vivid terms the hardships which some of the villagers suffered, especially those who lived in the hills. Being very poor and knowing no English, they were victims of persecution by forest officials. He ended his speech with an impassioned appeal on behalf of his constituents who had sent him and some others "for representing their grievances to this assembly hoping sincerely thereby that you at least would appeal to the proper authorities and have their grievances redressed: you may thus see that we don't crave for a higher civilisation in our country, for the introduction of a greater number of coaches, chairs, railways, watches and other luxuries."⁷⁴ Speeches in a similar vein, though not with the same degree of intensity, were made against the salt laws. The Conference ended by passing resolutions calling for separate government inquiries into the working of the forest and salt rules in South India.⁷⁵

Though the discussion of the salt and forest issues was a concession to a deeply felt rural grievance, it should not conceal the fact that these provincial conferences constituted essentially the forum of the professional elite. These

young urban-based politicians, who owed their existence to the professions which British rule had largely created in South India, were pragmatic reformers seeking to influence British policy rather than revolutionaries intending to overthrow the Raj. In the main, the reforms that they advocated were designed to give Indians a larger voice in the administration of the country, notably, through recasting the legislatures by admitting a nonofficial element elected on the basis of a limited franchise. The professional elite felt confident that such a change would not only acquaint Indians with the processes of government but would also enable them to ventilate more effectively their grievances and even seek their removal from within.

That there was a deeply seated distrust of the executive among the ranks of this elite is evident in the sentiments that were voiced in these provincial conferences. With memories of the excesses of the Grant Duff Administration still fresh in their minds, the delegates at these sessions devoted considerable attention towards finding ways and means of checking the power of the bureaucracy. The proposed reform of the legislatures promised to be one source of check. The popularly elected element was expected to probe deeply into official iniquities of any kind. Another check was the separation of revenue from judicial functions. The fusion of these functions had long been regarded as a source of official abuse, with the agricultural classes left to the mercy of grasping revenue officials. Moreover, in the eyes of the professional elite, this fusion was an anachronism, inconsistent with modern governmental practice.

As the curtain came down on the second provincial conference, an important era in the political evolution of South India also drew to a close. This era had begun with the search by politicians in Madras for a new and cohesive presidency-wide organization. Following the successful inauguration of the Madras Mahajana Sabha in 1884, the metropolitan leaders moved quickly to forge ties

with the plethora of local associations and literary societies which had already come into existence in the *mofussil*. That the latter agreed to join the Sabha was in some measure due to the fact that their leaders shared a certain identity of interest with their counterparts in Madras, attributable in large measure to their shared educational and professional backgrounds. Just as compelling were the tangible benefits that could be derived through united action. Politicians in Madras and the *mofussil* recognized that their coming together under the umbrella of a single provincial organization would allow them to widen their political horizons: they would no longer be local leaders concerned with local problems. For the same reason, these politicians also welcomed the idea of provincial conferences. Such gatherings would elevate them from the status of local politicians to leaders of provincial fame.

Equally revealing, in this period of rapid political change, was the fact that barely within hours of the termination of the second provincial conference, no less than seventeen of the delegates, ten from the *mofussil* and seven from Madras, took the train bound for Bombay to attend the first meeting of the Indian National Congress scheduled to begin a few days later. This transition from provincial to all-India politics might seem sudden, but it was a transition for which the prominent leaders of the professional elite had prepared themselves during the past few years.

6. The Congress and Communal Politics in South India

The growth of national political consciousness was an event of recent origin and was largely the creation of that small class of Western-educated Indians congregating in the larger urban centers of India. In the South, it was the professional elite which consistently espoused the cause of all-India unity. In the speeches of its leaders, in its writings in the press, and in the activities of its associations, this elite not only stressed the importance of national unity for the political regeneration of the country but also discussed the practical ways in which such unity ought to be realized. What imparted a sense of urgency to such designs was the Ilbert Bill episode. If some of the manifestations of the European agitation against this measure had divided the rulers and the ruled along racial lines, the decision of the government to go back on its proposals emphasized to the Indians their own disunity and organizational weakness. This feeling of inadequacy prompted some Indian groups to seek more effective forms of political expression. The convening of the Indian National Congress in 1885 demonstrated the determination of these groups to surmount the traditional barriers of caste, language, and region in their bid to offset the tide of European reaction in India.

THE CONVENING OF THE INDIAN NATIONAL CONGRESS

Prior to 1880, politicians in South India could hardly claim to have been zealous advocates of inter-regional cooperation. This stemmed less from the absence of opportunities than from the infancy of political life which made it almost impossible to build up any kind of durable links between the different regional centers of political activity. For example, at the height of the Lex Loci agitation in 1850, talks between the leaders of Calcutta and Madras on the feasibility of making a united protest failed despite the fact that the issue had stirred strong Hindu emotions.¹ Ultimately, Bengal and Madras submitted separate protest memorials against the measure. Similarly, when the British Indian Association sought to enlist the cooperation of the different Indian centers in making joint representations on the Charter question, the attempt floundered on the rocks of regional suspicions and misunderstandings. While Poona and Bombay formed their separate associations, Madras endured a short and uneasy partnership with Bengal before going its own way in 1852. When these associations drafted their petitions to the British Parliament, it was clear that, though they were seeking broadly similar objectives, they either lacked the will or had not found the means to translate their common purpose into some kind of united political action.

If the politicians recoiled from further ventures for some years after these early failures, the social reformers did not appear to display a similar reticence. The lead was taken by the Brahmo Samaj which during the 1860s made a bold attempt to carry the torch of its reformist message beyond its Bengali frontiers. In February 1864 Keshub Chandra Sen was deputed by the Brahmo Samaj to go on a lecture tour of South and Western India. His powerful and eloquent oratory, as well as his persuasive skill, had the desired effect. In Madras his appeal led to the formation of the Veda

Samaj a month after his departure. Bombay also responded, and the Prarthana Samaj--described as "a sister church" of the Brahmo Samaj--was organized in 1867.² By this time, similar inroads were being made into the North-Western Provinces and the Punjab owing to the exertions of Sen and his "itinerant missionaries" from Bengal, and an expanding network of Brahmo Samaj branches was beginning to link the important centers of British India. Significantly, Sen had also established in Calcutta a new "Brahmo Samaj of India" in 1866 which was indicative of his confidence in enlisting countrywide support for his movement.

Keshub Chandra Sen, however, was more than a mere social reformer engaged in overthrowing idolatry, changing marriage customs, or combatting caste exclusiveness. He was also an ardent believer in the cause of all-India unity and he looked to the Western-educated class, or the "Young India" as he called it, to bring about the "national reformation." In his speeches, he stressed the degenerate state into which the country had sunk, suggested ways of finding a remedy, and urged the educated class to take the lead.³

Make a small beginning. Let there be a dozen men in Bombay, a dozen in Madras, and a dozen in the Punjab, and we shall form the nucleus of a general confederation--one caste for all the educated natives of India,--and then we shall take in all other classes of the native communities, and unite in a vast and mighty confederation.

Similar sentiments were also voiced by the regular stream of Bengali reformers spanning the subcontinent during the 1870s and after. South India received its due quota of such missionaries who organized congregations; became teachers in areas where there was a shortage of qualified English teachers, and participated in charitable and social work, especially during the famine years of 1876-78.

Such activities, though of a modest nature, nevertheless demonstrated that there were areas of common interest in which men from different regional backgrounds could cooperate meaningfully. Also, the barriers of regional exclusiveness, for long nurtured by lack of personal contacts, began to collapse gradually as Bengali Samajists began to roam the subcontinent and recruits from different parts of the country went to Bengal for their training.

Some of the Bengali Samajists who came South were also members of the Indian Association which, since its foundation in 1876, had been zealously pursuing its declared objective of unifying "the Indian races and peoples upon the basis of common political interests and aspirations." One member of the Indian Association who made a strong political impact on Madras was Bipin Chandra Pal of the Sadharan Brahmo Samaj. On his way to Bangalore in September 1881, Pal delivered a stirring speech in Madras on the subject of "National Improvement." Much of his speech was a plea for all-India unity to redeem a people "groaning under foreign misrule." Though he agreed that India in the past was a mere "geographical entity," he was confident that one day it would become "one homogeneous nation."⁴

It is an Utopian idea. It is a chimera, but from history I have learnt that India, notwithstanding our 100 religions and 200 languages, will prosper and flourish. The histories of Germany, Italy and Switzerland tell us that we should not despair, and there shall be a day when the Madrassee shall embrace the Bengalee and walk hand in hand with each other. That day is not far off.

There is no doubt that politicians in search of all-India unity found much that was instructive in the achievements of the Brahmo Samaj. In establishing branch bodies, in undertaking lecture tours, and in cultivating personal ties with leaders in other parts of the country, Keshub Chandra Sen and

his fellow Samajists had provided a model of action which the Indian Association imitated with considerable success during the late 1870s. Utilizing every opportunity to stir up political activity inside and outside Bengal, the Indian Association seized upon the unpopular measures of Lytton's vice-royalty to mount an all-India agitation. The reduction of the age of entry into the civil service in 1876 provided the first important cause to organize "a national movement." The views of its branches were ascertained, a memorial was drafted, and S. N. Banerjea was deputed as special delegate to enlist support of other centers throughout the country. Banerjea's extensive tours took him to Madras in January 1878 where he urged the leaders to submit a protest memorial on the civil service issue.⁵ This procedure was repeated, with some variations in detail, when the Vernacular Press Act was passed in 1878 and duties on cotton imports were partially abolished a year later.⁶ In these issues, the Indian Association had sought to demonstrate that there were areas of common interest in which inter-regional cooperation was feasible.

Politicians in South India, particularly the members of the professional elite, were sufficiently impressed by the dedication and organizational skill of their Bengali counterparts to explore some practical ways of achieving all-India unity. Ananda Charlu, while speaking on the cotton duties issue in June 1879, advocated the formation of an "Indian Association having branches in every town where intelligent men can muster together, for the purpose of forming and disseminating their opinions." He expressed regret that because of "the want of intercommunication between the different Presidencies, or rather between the different towns where men of intelligence ought to be found, movements are made in one part without any consultation whatever with parties in the other."⁷

Ananda Charlu's idea of an all-India organization was echoed by N. Sivasamy Iyer, a graduate of Madras University. In a scheme he outlined in May

1880 for the formation of a "National Congress" or "Hindu Mahajana Sabha," Sivasamy Iyer called for the setting up of an all-India body with branches in every village, district, and region, supported by a National Fund to be collected with the help of editors of newspapers throughout the country. He claimed that only through organization could India achieve "true regeneration," as well as advance towards the goal of representative government.⁸

The editor of the *Hindu* agreed. Citing the example of Ireland, the editor argued in May 1881 that India's political regeneration depended upon the people's capacity "to combine for national purpose." The work of the British Indian Association and the Poona Sarvajanik Sabha was praised, but the editor wondered whether

. . . India's interests, so varied and so vast as they are, [can] be successfully fought by one or two political bodies acting at random and at great distance from one another, however able and patriotic these Associations may be? We fear not. To carry home, therefore, to the mind of the English public the strength of public opinion in India on any public question, there ought to be a large number of Associations scattered through the various parts of the country, whose duty is to create public opinion and represent it to the Government.⁹

The editor of the *Hindu* was obviously more concerned with the need to stimulate political activity through better organization than with devising a scheme whereby Indian people could "combine for national purpose." However, in January 1883, when a number of associations had emerged on the Indian political scene, the editor was prepared to indicate the kind of all-India cooperation he thought was feasible. He had learned of the proposal of the Indian Association to hold "an annual national congress" in some central city to which "native gentlemen from different parts of the country were to

be invited." If this idea was impractical, the editor of the *Hindu* asked whether "the associations that have been started in several important towns throughout the country cannot arrange to depute delegates to meet in a central place. They can devise a scheme of perpetual constitutional agitation and thereby provide a means of bringing the united Indian public opinion to the notice of Government or Parliament in a manner the force of which it will be impossible for the Anglo-Indian or the English public to mistake." The editor contended that the moment had arrived for concerted action:¹⁰

At present much of our energies are scattered and wasted by want of organised action. What an individual association or a local population represent to government as a grievance of the country is generally treated as the outcome of some intriguing and ambitious mind and consequently the representation though possibly based on existing facts is little heeded by Government. Therefore those various local energies should command an organised and central outlet which will command the attentive hearing of the authorities as being the genuine public feeling.

What gave this appeal a note of conviction was the European agitation against the Ilbert Bill. The rapidity with which the Europeans had formed the Anglo-Indian Defence Association, the skill and intensity with which they mounted the assault on the measure and its authors, and the disdain they showed towards Indian claims for equal rights were enough to create widespread Indian alarm throughout the country. Even if the Indians for tactical reasons decided against counterdemonstrations, for fear of aggravating racial tensions, it was nevertheless apparent that some kind of all-India co-operation was necessary to neutralize the propaganda of the Anglo-Indian Defence Association and put forward the authoritative opinion of the Indian

people as a whole. The editor of the *Hindu*, moved by these considerations, wrote in July 1883:¹¹

The time for half-measures, and half-hearted action is gone; that for united and sustaining efforts has arrived. The two hundred and fifty millions living in this vast continent should no longer regard themselves as inhabitants of different provinces bound together by no common interest or common grievances. They have become the nation of a great and flourishing empire; their interests have been unified; and they must henceforth stand or fall together.

This was preaching to the converted. By now, such exhortations had almost given way to the formulation of practical schemes for all-India cooperation. One scheme that was widely discussed at this time was the starting of an Indian journal in England. The editor of the *Hindu* believed that this scheme was feasible and urged that provincial committees be formed to find subscribers and contributors.¹²

Another scheme that was floated at this juncture was the National Fund. The Indian Association had launched such a fund in July 1883 to find resources to continue its political work. The editor of the *Hindu*, while welcoming any proposal to promote "native interests as distinct from those of the Anglo-Indians," urged the leaders of the various provincial organizations to initiate consultations so as to determine "the objects on which the fund is to be spent, the amount of the fund, and the rules to direct its distribution and apportionment among the different provinces of the country." The projects to which the editor wanted this fund to be applied included running of a weekly journal in London, providing Indians with scholarships for competing in the civil service examinations and undergoing technical education, and maintaining of permanent delegates in England for "creating public

opinion on Indian questions and obtaining redress for Indian grievances."¹³

However, it was the Indian Association's idea of holding "an annual conference of representatives from various parts of the country" which appealed most strongly to the editor of the *Hindu*. Such gatherings, the paper believed, would "have the invaluable effect of harmonising local feelings, diffusing public spirit, and creating and consolidating native public opinion. Backward provinces will be stimulated into activity and those that are advanced will lend the benefit of their experience and knowledge."¹⁴ When it was announced in November 1883 that the International Exhibition was to be held at Calcutta in the following month, the *Hindu* was quick to remark that this occasion provided "a splendid opportunity for having a grand National Conference in Calcutta." Urging the Indian Association to take full advantage of this chance, the paper advised that leaders from all parts of the country be invited for this gathering to discuss such important issues as the National Fund, local self-government, civil service examinations, mass education, and the Arms Act.¹⁵ It is clear that the *Hindu* was not entirely happy with the way in which the first National Conference was organized and it remarked that the Indian Association should hold the next session at "a more central place and in a more favourable season of the year."¹⁶

There is little doubt, looking at this plethora of schemes and projects for achieving all-India cooperation, that Indian politicians were by and large still groping in their attempts to give concrete expression to their all-India identity. In part, this plethora of schemes stemmed from the existence of different political groups all simultaneously engaged in pushing their particular projects without adequate consultation with each other.

One such group was the leadership of the Indian Association. Since its foundation, this body

had thought of an all-India memorial on the civil service question, floated a National Fund, and convened the National Conference. These schemes had a mixed reception from the other centers of political activity in the country, largely because the leaders of the Indian Association had not allowed for prior consultation with their counterparts in other provinces.

A second group, functioning independently of the Indian Association, gathered around A. O. Hume, generally recognized as the "father of the Indian National Congress." Since his retirement from the Indian Civil Service in 1882, Hume had established his home in Simla and had begun to turn his energies to politics and philanthropy. He became a confidant of Lord Ripon and some of the viceroy's advisers who wanted a trustworthy agent to establish ties with the Indian politicians. The latter, as Anil Seal says, "esteemed Hume as the man who could tell them what Viceregal Lodge was thinking."¹⁷ It is difficult to be precise as to who were Hume's friends, but there is no doubt that he sought his friends from the Western-educated class--whom he called "the soul of the [Indian] nation"¹⁸--which included prominent officials, lawyers, and newspaper editors. In a letter to the *Pioneer* in April 1883, Hume listed as his "friends" the editors of the *Hindu Patriot*, *Indian Mirror*, *Hindu*, *Indian Spectator*, *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, and *Tribune*. Significantly, there was no mention of the editor of the *Bengalee*, S. N. Banerjea, the prominent leader of the Indian Association.¹⁹ Hume was also connected with the Theosophical Society, which had established branches in leading Indian centers after 1879 and held annual conventions attended by European and Indian members. Hume was President of an Anglo-Indian branch in Simla, and although his connections with the Theosophical Society ended soon afterwards, there is no doubt that his friendship with many Indian Theosophists survived this rupture.²⁰

Hume's intervention in Indian politics, as

judged from his letters of the time, sprang from his fear that continuing alienation between British authority and the subject people might eventually lead to a dangerous catastrophe. In a private letter to Ripon in 1882, Hume claimed that "for years past India has been becoming more or less saturated with discontent--with dissatisfaction if not positive disloyalty . . . Day after day the saturation was & is increasing partly owing to the gradual change in the character of our Govt., partly to the gradual change in the relations between district officers & their people, partly to the growth of education & partly to other causes too numerous to mention. Sooner or later as things were going a catastrophe was inevitable."²¹ However, to Hume's relief, Ripon's viceroyalty had "changed everything for the better." According to Hume, Ripon had succeeded in converting "as though with the wand of a magician, universal sullen discontent into widespread and enthusiastic loyalty," and "restored the people's waning belief in British honesty of purpose and good faith." Equally, Hume believed that Ripon's reforms had had the effect of rendering "the whole country once more wholly amenable to the intellectual guides." He regarded the latter as "the brains of India" who were also "unwaveringly on the side of the British Government." To ensure that this class continued to play its role in maintaining the political equilibrium in India, Hume wanted it to be justly treated, lest its task of keeping "the pulses of the body at an equal flow" be made more difficult.²²

Hume was anxious that the Western-educated Indians should organize themselves, partly to overcome their own numerical weakness and partly to demonstrate on important occasions that they were capable of speaking with one voice for the country as a whole. It is not known with what kind of pre-conceptions Hume set about to achieve this, though it is evident that he favored the idea of setting up caucuses consisting of trusted friends in the important centers of the country. Nothing is known

as to how many such caucuses were set up or who exactly was recruited into them. However, by the early months of 1883, Hume's handiwork was beginning to attract the public eye through the movement set afoot to secure an extension of Lord Ripon's viceroyalty by sending numerous memorials to Queen Victoria. Meetings were held in all prominent Indian cities, and addresses were adopted expressing India's confidence in the ability and the policies of the Viceroy. In May 1883 Hume informed Ripon that he had seen several of these addresses and said that they would be submitted "through the usual channels." Hume also expressed his suspicions that the Queen might be "against us" but felt that these addresses "*might* have some effect upon her ideas."²³

In 1884 Hume's caucuses went through the same motions in supporting Ripon's efforts to raise the age of entry into the civil service. In April 1884, at Ripon's suggestion, Hume had called upon his Indian allies throughout the country "to strengthen the Viceroy's hands by numerous and influential memorials couched in moderate language and addressed to the Secretary of State."^{*} The suggestion was accepted, and in the months that followed meetings were held and memorials were adopted by every important Indian association in the country.

However, it was the occasion of Ripon's departure from India that provided Hume's caucuses, or "head centres" as he called them, with an unrivaled opportunity to demonstrate their latent capacity for organization and united political action. In September 1884 the Simla correspondent of the

* Hume's letter was published in the Anglo-Indian papers, though they failed to identify the writer. Hume remarked to Ripon's Private Secretary: "There having been *some treachery somewhere.*" *Ripon Papers*, Add. MSS. 43616, Hume to Primrose, n.d.

Indian Mirror, most probably Hume, called for "a grand farewell demonstration to Lord Ripon for his large-hearted, liberal, and statesmanlike policy, which he has tried to inaugurate in this country."²⁴ The proposal was warmly welcomed by the Indian press throughout the country. The *Hindu*, while calling for strong support for the demonstrations, enumerated the many debts which India owed to the departing Viceroy:²⁵

He has created in this short period in the minds of the people of this country an interest in its affairs; he has put into their minds the notion quite new to them that they have an interest in the manner in which their country is governed . . . He has also brought home to us the idea of self-government, an idea quite foreign in its present form to our national traditions and instincts. He has given a shape and a mould to national aspirations and has pointed to us not only a legitimate goal of ambition, but the road that lies to it.

For almost two months, the Indian press waged a publicity campaign to stir up popular enthusiasm for the farewell demonstrations. In November 1884 a large public meeting, attended by all shades of Indian opinion, was held in Madras in which it was resolved that an address would be presented by a deputation to Lord Ripon at Bombay.²⁶ Similar meetings were held in other *mofussi* towns in South India, as indeed throughout India as a whole. Ripon's final journey from Simla to Bombay, stretching over five weeks and linking the main towns of North India, proved to be, in the words of one observer, "a triumphal march, such as India had never witnessed--a long procession, in which seventy million people sang hosanna to their friend."²⁷ Bombay climaxed the entire demonstration. To this western metropolis came countless delegations from various parts of the country, including twelve from

South India.

Neither discerning European observers nor Indian politicians had any fundamental misconceptions about the significance of the farewell demonstrations for Lord Ripon. W. A. Porter, for many years Principal of Kumbaconam College, told an Indian audience in Tanjore: "In the last days of Lord Ripon's Viceroyalty you found out that native opinion had surprising unanimity and volume. All over India men were moved by the same feeling and spoke the same language. Opinion had organised itself."²⁹ To those who conceived the demonstrations, the success of their venture was hailed as the "first achievement of national India." According to the *Hindu*, whose editor was a prominent participant in the affair, the demonstrations were not merely the expression of Indian gratitude to the departing Viceroy but also aimed "to prove to the world the existence of a powerful native opinion which is capable of organisation and which has acquired a consciousness of its importance and strength." The demonstrations, the paper claimed, were "a distinctly political movement" intended to show "the change that has come over the political feeling and knowledge of the people, and its growing intensity and width."³⁰

If the testimony of some of the Madras leaders who attended the Bombay demonstrations is to be believed, it was on this occasion that the idea of the Indian National Congress was actually mooted. In March 1888 the editor of the *Hindu*, countering Raghunatha Rao's claim that the Congress was conceived at Madras following the Convention of the Theosophical Society in December 1884, asserted that it was during the Bombay demonstrations that members of the Madras deputation "had a talk with their Bombay friends about a meeting of reformers from different Provinces." Hume was present in these discussions and it was he who was largely instrumental in implementing this idea.³¹ Supporting testimony came from another Madras member who had gone to Bombay to bid farewell to Lord Ripon.

Ananda Charlu, in an article he published on the Indian National Congress in 1903, claimed that it was at the Bombay demonstrations that the convening of the Congress "actually took shape and met the eye." He recounted what actually took place:

I was a member of the deputation from Madras; and among many interesting events, which took place on that occasion, was an evening party given us all . . . Many and stalwart were the men whom I there witnessed and mixed with. It was there and among these that for the first time, the idea found expression, in terms, that an annual gathering should be convened of all India, beginning with the next ensuing year, so far as delegates might be willing to be induced to come to a central city, to discuss questions in which the country, *as a whole*, may be said to be interested and on which a practically unanimous opinion would be arrived at and declared.

Ananda Charlu went on to claim that this meeting dispersed without deciding either on the location or the date when the annual convention would be held. Later, the initiative was taken by the leaders of Poona, supported by Hume, and it was they who matured plans to hold the first Congress there in December 1885.³²

From the rather fragmentary evidence, it is apparent that Hume played the dominant role in the organization of the Congress. According to G. Subramania Iyer, who was intimately associated with the Congress since its birth, Hume not only conceived "the idea of an annual assembly of leading Indian politicians" but also "worked out a scheme which included the idea that the Governor of the Province where the assembly was held should preside over its deliberations."³³ The latter part of the scheme was vetoed by Lord Dufferin in May 1885, but by this time Hume had already helped the Bombay leaders in forming the Bombay Presidency

Association, visited the various regional centers in the country to consult the leaders and enlist their support, and finally, secured the Viceroy's sympathy for his scheme "to assemble a Political Convention of delegates."³⁴

Satisfied with arrangements in India, Hume set sail for England in August where with characteristic energy he met important leaders to inform them of his plans and secure whatever assistance was necessary.³⁵ The intervention of the British General Elections in November gave Hume and his Indian allies a chance to publicize India's cause before the British electorate. Six political associations, including the Madras Mahajana Sabha, published and distributed "a general address to electors of the United Kingdom on behalf of India."³⁶ At the same time, three Indian delegates representing Bengal, Bombay, and Madras presidencies were dispatched to England "to interest and inform the British public on Indian matters" and support the candidature of the "friends of India."³⁷

When Hume returned to India early in December, it was formally announced that "a Congress of native gentlemen from different parts of India" would be held in Poona at the end of the month.³⁸ However, the outbreak of cholera in the city led to the change of location to Bombay.

THE SEARCH FOR COMMUNAL SUPPORT

From the preceding discussion, it is clear that the strongest advocates of the cause of all-India unity in the South were the group of politicians who had played an active part in organizing the Madras Mahajana Sabha and the provincial conferences of 1884 and 1885. The *Hindu*, the authoritative spokesman of this group, had been increasingly vocal in its pleas for some concrete scheme for inter-regional cooperation ever since the Anglo-Indians unleashed their campaign against the Ilbert Bill in the early months of 1883. To some extent,

this demand was met by the holding of joint public meetings in the various Indian centers to express Indian solidarity on issues of common interest. Without doubt the most successful of such meetings was the staging of the farewell demonstrations to Lord Ripon when numerous delegations from different parts of the country converged on Bombay in December 1884. Hence, when the first Congress met there a year later, the delegates who came belonged mainly to that small group of activists who in the past three years had worked closely with Hume and had been most prominent in holding demonstrations in vindication of Ripon's policies.

Invitations to attend the first Congress were issued by the Poona Sarvajanik Sabha and the Bombay Presidency Association. In response to an invitation, the Madras Mahajana Sabha met on 12 December 1885 and nominated six delegates to represent the metropolis, namely, S. Subramania Iyer, G. Subramania Iyer, Rangiah Naidu, Ananda Charlu, Viraraghava Chari, and T. Nemberumal Chetty.³⁹ The last named dropped out, but three others were added to the Madras deputation, namely, C. Singaravelu Mudaliar, M. E. Sriranga Chari, and S. V. Athalye, all active members of the Madras Mahajana Sabha. It is apparent that only members of this association were elected as delegates. The *mofussil* nominated thirteen delegates representing twelve towns, and every one of them was either a member of an affiliated body of the Madras Mahajana Sabha or had attended the provincial conferences. Among the conspicuous *mofussil* figures who participated in the Bombay Congress were Sabapathy Mudaliar, Kesava Pillay, Paul Peter Pillay, Saminatha Iyer, Narasimulu Naidu, and Venkata Subbrayudu.⁴⁰

The presence of a relatively large delegation from South India at this Congress gathering, and the active role that its leaders played in the proceedings, did not go unnoticed in the press. The *Indian Mirror*, whose editor was also a delegate, remarked that "Benighted Madras" was "the strongest in point of numbers" and claimed that "in course of

time, Madras will outrun not only Bengal, but every other Province in the race for progress, though preserving its national characteristics more prominently than any other Province."⁴¹ These sentiments were echoed by the *Tribune*:

Madras sent the greatest number of delegates, all of good education and high social standing. They completely enchanted the audience with their liberal views and impressive eloquence. Clad in conservative Hindu garments, with their shining foreheads rubbed with sandal after the orthodox Hindu fashion, and speaking in eloquent English about the various ways in which India should improve her political status, they exhibited a spectacle at once charming and instructive; charming in as much as it was a glorious sight to behold genuine Hindus (preserving intact ancient custom of their great race) holding the most radical views about politics; instructive in as much as it was capable of infusing a belief that India could improve, to the highest extent desirable, its political status without becoming *Anglicized*.⁴²

Although the pro-Congress organs like the *Hindu* hailed the convening of the Congress "as a memorable day in the annals of our national career,"⁴³ they could not conceal the fact that the secrecy that surrounded this gathering had given some credence to the critics' charge that it was "a hole-and-corner Conference."⁴⁴ A controversy soon started in which the critics of the Congress challenged its claim to speak for all-India, denied that its delegates represented the country at large, and cast doubts as to whether the resolutions passed at Bombay faithfully reflected the will of the people of India. This controversy convinced the leaders of the Congress that secrecy was hardly consistent with a movement seeking to represent all-India interests. Hence, soon after the delegates

left Bombay, the formal resolutions passed at the gathering were circulated to the various political bodies for endorsement by the country at large. In South India, public meetings were held under the aegis of the Madras Mahajana Sabha and its affiliates to explain the aims and program of the Congress, and some of them were addressed by delegates who had participated in the Bombay Congress. These meetings, to some extent, helped towards enlightening public opinion in South India as to what the Congress was attempting to do.

Equally significant was the decision of the Congress leadership to institute a system of electing delegates for the second gathering in Calcutta in December 1886. It was agreed that the practice that had obtained at the first Congress, when delegates came as "volunteers in the good cause, uncommissioned, as a rule, by any constituencies, local or general," should be replaced by a system where delegates "ought to receive some public authorisation from the bodies and communities (or leading members of the latter) whom they were to represent."⁴⁵ When these instructions were received in October 1886, the Committee of the Madras Mahajana Sabha transmitted them to its affiliated and other associations throughout the Presidency urging them to convene public meetings to elect delegates. Elections got under way almost immediately, and by the end of November the names of thirty-six *mofussil* delegates, representing fourteen districts, were forwarded for submission to Calcutta.⁴⁶ Though perhaps satisfactory in securing some semblance of territorial representation, these elections did not broaden the base of Congress support in South India by securing the representation of the various factional and minority groups in the region. In effect, the delegates elected belonged in large measure to that group which had been actively associated with the Madras Mahajana Sabha and the provincial conferences.

However, it was the decision to hold the third Congress in Madras which stimulated the political

leadership in South India to make an earnest attempt to broaden the base of Congress support in the Presidency. The success with which the first two sessions had been staged imposed a responsibility as well as a challenge upon the leaders in South India. On the one hand, as the *Hindu* stressed, the Presidency had to demonstrate to the country at large that it was "not behind any other part of India in discharging her part of public obligations."⁴⁷ Like Bombay and Calcutta before her, Madras had to prove that she possessed "a real capacity for organization and union," qualities regarded as vital to the ultimate success of the Congress movement. On the other hand, South Indian politicians were anxious to nurture the continued growth of "the national principle" and convert the Congress into "a really representative movement." It was now freely admitted by the pro-Congress organs that the attainment of all-India unity was a gradual process, with every year witnessing "a triumphant advance in the work of the year preceding." The Calcutta gathering, in the eyes of the Congress leaders, had had one obvious shortcoming: the failure to secure Muslim support, an occurrence which the *Hindu* attributed to "an insidious attempt . . . made to sow discord and foment sectional jealousies among the Mohammadan community."⁴⁸ The politicians of South India were anxious to avoid repetition of this event in Madras.

Muslim politics in South India during the 1880s showed a certain fragmented character. A number of associations had been established, advocating almost identical objectives and sometimes even involving the same personalities. The first to be formed was the Anjuman-i-Islamiah, founded in 1876 at a time when there was Muslim anxiety about the future of Turkey in the face of external aggression. When Russia declared war on Turkey in 1877, the leaders of this body launched the Turkish Relief Fund to remit money to their embattled brethren in Turkey. However, with the termination of the war in 1878, the Anjuman-i-Islamiah became dormant

until it was revived in May 1881.

On this occasion, the leaders showed greater concern for their local problems. They wished to ventilate the grievances of the Muslims, work towards reforming "such customs and usages as are injurious to Mussulmans and obstructing their progress," and "establish good fellowship between several sects of Islam, and between the Mussulmans and members of other classes of the community."⁴⁹ Humayun Jah Bahadur,* a descendent of Tipu Sultan and a wealthy Shia with large landed and business interests in Madras, was elected as President. Ahmad Mohidin, a member of the Prince of Arcot's staff, was named Secretary, while Mahomed Abdullah Badsha, a wealthy merchant, filled the post of Treasurer. By July 1884 this association had about 500 members on its rolls, had started two schools to educate Muslim youth up to middle school level, and conducted an Urdu paper, called *Ittifaq*, to voice the claims of the community.

A second Muslim association was founded in September 1883 with the inauguration of the Madras Branch of the Central National Mahomedan Association. The parent body had been founded in Bengal in 1878, but its activities had attracted little attention in the South until the arrival of Syed Abdur Rahman in Madras in March 1883. A Bengali Muslim, he had qualified as a barrister in England, and had migrated southwards to practice in the Madras High Court. He was said to belong to "the advanced party" who wished "to create a similar movement in the community as was created by that Irish Barrister who organised the Catholic

* Humayun Jah Bahadur (1837-1893) was born and educated in Calcutta before he settled in Madras. He enjoyed the confidence of the local government and was constantly consulted on questions affecting the Muslim community. He served as the Muslim member of the Madras Legislative Council for almost twenty-five years. *Hindu*, 16 December 1893.

Association in Ireland."⁵⁰ In launching this association, one of its founders contended that there was "no proper channel" for Muslims to communicate with the government, and he went on to claim that the body was necessary for the "social, intellectual and political improvements" of the community. Oddly enough, Humayun Jah Bahadur was elected "Permanent President" and Mahomed Abdullah Badsha, Treasurer, although both continued their connection with the Anjuman-i-Islamiah. Syed Abdur Rahman was named Secretary, while Mir Ansaruddin, Presidency Magistrate, and Mahomed Ishak, Assistant Government Agent at Chepauk, were elected Vice-Presidents.⁵¹

In October 1885, a third Muslim association was founded in Madras, called the Anjuman-i-Mufidi-Ahla-i-Islam. Although the main aim of this body was to promote industrial education among the Muslims by starting workshops where such crafts as carpentry, tailoring, and embroidery would be taught, its leaders also aspired to further the general interests of the Muslim community. The President of this body was Lieutenant-Colonel T. O. Underwood, Paymaster, Carnatic Stipends, who was largely instrumental in getting industrial workshops established. The post of Secretary was filled by Syed Mahomed Nizamuddin, a lawyer practicing in the Madras High Court.⁵²

With three Muslim associations in the metropolis, all working for broadly similar objectives, there were the inevitable demands for a single association to give greater solidity to the demands of the Muslim community. One advocate of this idea was C. D. Macleane, Collector of Sea Customs and Chairman of the Mahomedan Educational Endowment Fund. In April 1886 Macleane invited the leaders of the three associations to form a central association. Two of them agreed, but the Anjuman-i-Mufidi-Ahla-i-Islam refused to join on the grounds that the committee of the new body had not been democratically elected.⁵³ The Central Mahomedan Association was formally launched in August 1886 with Humayun Jah Bahadur as President and Mohidin

Sheriff, a doctor at a Triplicane hospital, as Secretary.⁵⁴ But Muslim solidarity was far from being achieved as yet in Madras, despite a growing Muslim concern with the escalating political agitation of the Hindus through such organizations as the Madras Mahajana Sabha and the Congress.

In spite of their divisions, which often mirrored personality differences, these Muslim associations were doubtless inchoate expressions of the community's concern with maintaining its own identity. Although Islam with its institutional controls provided a high degree of inner cohesion, the Muslims in South India felt themselves to be vulnerable in the new situation which British rule had created in the country. While in the past political power and economic influence had compensated for their lack of numbers, during the nineteenth century both these sources of strength had been eroded away. Those who felt this loss most acutely were the Muslim conquerors and administrators who had settled in the larger urban centers of South India. For a time, the loss of political power was concealed somewhat by the retention of the Nawabships of Kurnool and Arcot which provided employment for a large number of retainers. However, the Nawabship of Kurnool was abolished in 1839 when the Nawab was found to be conspiring to overthrow the British Raj. In 1855 the Nawabship of Arcot was also abolished, much to the dismay of many Muslims in the Presidency. Although the Nawab was henceforth recognized as "the first nobleman at Madras,"⁵⁵ that did not disguise the fact that he was a mere pensioner of the British, shorn of his patronage and influence. Many Muslim families which in the past had depended on the Nawab's bounty now swelled the numbers of Muslim stipendiaries of the state; some migrated to Hyderabad and other places in search of a livelihood, while others bore down heavily on those families with landed property or fixed income.⁵⁶

Economic impoverishment was accompanied by a marked diminution in the share of high administrative

positions in Muslim hands. In the heyday of their political power, high appointments in the government had been one source of their affluence, but such opportunities vanished with the appearance of the British Raj, while in the middle and lower rungs of the administrative ladder the Muslims had to encounter competition from the Hindus. As time went on, the Muslims fared worse, a condition aggravated no doubt by the introduction of the competitive tests in 1858. Having shunned Western education, the Muslims seemed to have virtually abdicated the field to the more adaptable Hindus. In 1872, when Governor Hobart ordered an inquiry into the condition of the Muslims in South India, it was found that Muslims held only 19 out of the 485 elite positions in the judicial and revenue line. Hobart, concerned that the extinction of the Muslim element from the higher public service might throw strong temptation "to disaffection and (should occasion occur) to conspiracy against the state," argued that the revival of Muslim fortunes lay in their acceptance of Western education.⁵⁷

For almost three decades prior to Hobart's arrival, that is, since the founding of the Madras High School, Muslims in South India had set their face against Western education either through indifference, poverty, or hostility. The coastal Muslims, especially the Mappillas and Labbays, preoccupied with their commercial pursuits and with no literary tradition, were fundamentally apathetic to the new learning. They continued to send their children to the traditional religious schools where the latter were instructed in the tenets of the Koran, acquired the rudiments of knowledge, and learned the local Dravidian language. The Urdu-speaking Muslims, descendants of the former rulers, regarded Western education with hostility. Pride in their own past, resentment of their present rulers, and opposition to secular instruction as such, all combined to keep these Muslims away from the schools and colleges which the British had established in South India. Hence, by 1872-73 only

sixty-one Muslims had passed their matriculation while only a single Muslim had taken a B.A. degree.⁵⁸

To tackle this Muslim malaise, Hobart suggested a two-fold remedy. First, he wanted Muslim objections to the existing educational system to be taken into account. Hobart felt that the system of instruction was "framed with exclusive reference to the Hindoos," which left the Muslims at a "serious disadvantage." To redress this bias, he persuaded the Department of Public Instruction to establish special schools for Muslims in areas where they were numerously concentrated. In such schools, instruction was to be provided in Urdu and English. Arrangements were to be made to train Muslim teachers, while suitable textbooks were to be secured from other provinces if necessary. Thus, the so-called system of "special agency" came into vogue in 1872, and during the next decade this system was developed to provide further facilities for Muslim students, including fee exemptions, reservation of scholarships, and appointment of Muslims as inspectors of schools.⁵⁹

The other remedy which Hobart prescribed for the Muslim malaise was to remove the general Muslim impression that the government was disinclined to admit them into the public service. He secured the consent of his Council to circulate orders to all district officers, as well as heads of departments, calling on them to dispel this impression "in the most speedy and convincing manner by the employment, as opportunity offers, of a fair proportion of those Mahomedans who may have passed the prescribed tests of qualification, and by the promotion, according to their merits, of those who are already employed."⁶⁰ This gesture, Hobart argued, would convince Muslims that the government was interested in their welfare, while at the same time inducing them to educate their children with a view to public employment.⁶¹ Hobart's remedies seemed to have achieved some of the desired results, at least in so far as Western education began to gain in

popularity among the Muslims.

Hobart's endeavors, and the changes in official policy towards Muslim education, created over the next decade or so an incipient class of Western-educated Muslims in South India who were either absorbed into the administration or became lawyers, journalists, teachers, or doctors. It was this class which showed an acute sensitivity to the problems that faced the Muslim community as a whole. Its education had opened its eyes to the fact that in the not too distant past Muslims had enjoyed political power and economic strength and the Hindus were in a position of subservience. But all this had changed radically since the advent of the British Raj, with the Hindus asserting their economic power while their acceptance of Western learning had given them a virtual stranglehold of the modern professions and the middle and lower rungs of the administration of South India. Also alarming to these Muslims was the emergence of Hindu nationalism, finding expression through provincial and all-India associations during the early 1880s, which heightened Muslim consciousness of their own political effeteness and minority status.

In this feeling of helplessness, the Muslims turned outwardly to the British and inwardly to themselves. In the British, they saw an ally who would not only act as impartial arbiters in the distribution of official patronage but would also keep Hindu nationalism within proper bounds. In turning inwardly, the Muslims recognized the importance of unity and organization in preserving their identity and resisting certain Hindu demands, notably, for increased representation in the legislatures and the higher echelons of the civil service. Muslims, already alarmed at the growing Hindu influence in the administration, had no wish to see the highest organs of executive and legislative power in the country transferred from "the hands of the neutral classes" to the Hindus.⁶²

Two other minority groups in South India whose support the Congress politicians wanted to enlist

were the Indian Christians and the Eurasians. The former, constituting just over 2 per cent of the population of the Presidency, did not allow their numerical weakness to stand in the way of their improvement. Education provided them the main avenue to upward mobility. In 1885-86, 52 per cent of the Indian Christian boys were attending schools, an average which placed them second only to the Brahmins.⁶³ By this time, educated members of the community were found in every important profession, holding their own in a highly competitive world without seeking government patronage or depending on the goodwill of other communities. Surprisingly, their leaders had been slow in organizing communal associations and, indeed, some of them had identified themselves with the Hindus by joining the Madras Mahajana Sabha and participating in its activities.

However, the seeds of communal solidarity did eventually take root. An expression of this was the National Church Movement, the brainchild of Pulney Andy. A medical practitioner who retired in 1882, Pulney Andy had settled in Madras "to work in the land of my birth to strengthen the cause of Christianity among my brethren." He deplored the sectarian divisions in the community, divisions which he attributed in India to "the mere accident of Baptism." After he had consulted prominent leaders of the community in Madras as to the feasibility of organizing "an Indian Church on Non-Sectarian principles," a preliminary meeting was held at his home in November 1885, and a scheme to organize the national church was accepted. In September 1886 the National Church was formally launched, with Pulney Andy as President. Its constitution allowed its members to continue their affiliations with their respective churches, while ministers were to be recruited from any church so long as they agreed to be nonsectarian. Regular services of the National Church were held, a weekly paper called the *Eastern Star* was started, and expenses were met by voluntary contributions.⁶⁴

There is little doubt that the National Church movement in South India was a conscious attempt on the part of the Indian Christians to assert their own identity and not be too closely tied to the apron strings of their European pastors. Pulney Andy, who wanted Christianity in India to be "moulded into an eastern form," believed that a united church was "suited to the national peculiarities and instincts of the people" and would encourage habits of "independence, and self-reliance" and introduce "a system of self-help, self-work and self-government in the ministrations of the Church, without depending on foreign aid and the charity of the people of Europe and America." Excessive dependence on the latter countries, Pulney Andy pointed out, had cast "reproach and contempt" on the community, offended its sense of self-respect and pride, and even discouraged Hindus from joining Christianity on the belief that it was "a mere asylum for forlorn creatures."⁶⁵ For this state of things, the European missionaries were held largely responsible. It was claimed by the advocates of the National Church that these missionaries had imported into India "the sectarian bigotry of English Churches" and had molded Indian Christianity "too much after European patterns."⁶⁶ Others complained that Indian Christians were not given a voice in managing the affairs of their own community. W. L. Venkataramiah, a founding member of the National Church, admitted that one of the reasons which prompted him and his friends to act was their exclusion by the European missionaries "from anything like a fair share in the management of church affairs." He alleged that some of the missionaries had lost touch with their congregations and had consequently endangered the development of "a healthy church life."⁶⁷

By their attempts to blur the sectarian divisions, by renouncing foreign financial support, and by criticizing the management of the European missionaries, the founders of the National Church stirred up hostility in certain powerful quarters

in South India. The European missions, still the source of much of the funds and patronage, were clearly alarmed by the rhetoric of those associated with the National Church. The Indian pastors, very much under the control of the European missions, became the outspoken critics of the National Church and urged the laity to keep aloof from the services of the National Church.⁶⁸

The community thus appeared to be divided and those opposed to the National Church formed the Madras Native Christian Association in November 1887. This body hoped to promote the secular interests of the community without meddling with spiritual questions or interfering with the way that the various churches were run. In its prospectus, it claimed that as the community as a whole had "increased both in numbers and importance" it was essential that it have a recognized channel to voice its claims. At the same time, this body was to work towards uniting a community widely dispersed in the Presidency.⁶⁹ N. Subramaniam, a lawyer in the Madras High Court and the guiding spirit behind the formation of the association, was elected as its first President, while Rev. John Lazarus filled the post of Secretary. By December 1888 a total of 114 members had enrolled with the Association, the majority being *mofussil* residents.⁷⁰ Pulney Andy admitted that the formation of the Madras Native Christian Association had "caused a split in the camp of the Native Christians community," and was a blow to his hopes of achieving communal solidarity through the National Church.⁷¹

The Eurasian community, despite its numerical smallness, had long displayed a capacity for organization: As early as 1862 an East Indian Association had been organized in Madras "to watch over the interests of the East Indian community,"⁷² although little was heard of its activities in the ensuing years. With the formation of the Anglo-Indian and Eurasian Association in Bengal in 1876, there were discussions in Madras for the formation of a similar body. However, it was not until

October 1879 that the Eurasian and Anglo-Indian Association of Southern India was formally inaugurated, largely due to the indefatigable D. S. White, an official in the Department of Public Instruction in Madras. Elected as President, a post he was to hold until his death ten years later, White sought to rally the Eurasian community, assisted by such leaders as W. S. Gantz, a lawyer in the Madras High Court, B. H. Chester, a professor at Doveton Protestant College, and B. Lavery, retired Principal of Pachaiyappa College and a Municipal Commissioner of Madras.

White was convinced that an Eurasian association was "a political necessity," at least to ensure that the legitimate rights of the community were not eroded away through the acts of the local authorities. In theory, the British Parliament had recognized the "nationality, rights and privileges" of the Eurasians domiciled in India, but the recent policies of the government left White with the impression that the community was being discriminated against. For one, "political representation" had been denied. White contended that, while the Muslims enjoyed a permanent seat in the Madras Legislative Council, the Eurasians had not been similarly favored.⁷³ A more serious complaint was the charge that Eurasians had been unfairly treated in the distribution of official appointments, largely owing to the mistaken notion that "a native is none other than a *Pure Asiatic*." In a memorial to the Secretary of State, White urged that the claims of the Eurasians be considered "officially and politically apart from that of undomiciled Europeans." He did not want "special privileges" for his community, but only that they be accorded the status of "Natives of India" and treated like any other "permanently settled" community.⁷⁴

However, White did not believe that public service alone would meet the long-term needs of the community. To him, the future lay in agriculture and industry and, consequently, much of the energies of the Eurasian and Anglo-Indian Association of

Southern India were devoted towards providing opportunities for its members in these sectors. Priority was given to the scheme for establishing agricultural colonies in an effort "to root" the floating Eurasian population. Lands were acquired in Chingleput district and Mysore State with capital raised from the community. To promote industrial education, workshops were started in Madras. White travelled extensively throughout South India exhorting local leaders to start branches and raise capital to realize the objects of the association. By 1882 four agricultural colonies had been founded, twenty-eight branches opened, and a capital fund of Rs 60,000 had been raised to be expended on the various schemes connected with the Association.⁷⁵

The true significance of White's leadership lay in his attempt to identify his community with India. He had little sympathy with those in his community who believed that Eurasians must eventually seek their home elsewhere. This attitude, he reasoned, had given the community the character of a "floating" population and had reduced it to a state "bordering on pauperism." In calling upon the Eurasians to identify themselves with the peoples of India, White believed that there were many issues on which cooperation was feasible. He strongly supported the Indianization of the civil service wherever Indians of talent and competence were found and he accused the Madras authorities of recruiting nondomiciled Europeans into the higher ranks of the Uncovenanted Civil Service in defiance of the restriction imposed by the Secretary of State's order of 1879. Equally, he supported the Ilbert Bill on the grounds that its principle was "unassailable" and that it was merely removing a race disqualification which had long been disowned by the British authorities.⁷⁶

His outspoken support for this measure, as indeed his participation in the demonstrations that had been organized in honor of Ripon, alienated many members of his community who alleged that he was demeaning the status of the community by

closely identifying it with the "natives." White dismissed these charges as evidence of "sickly sentimentalism" and urged the community to "go manfully for the term native of India." "Why," he remarked, "it is the most splendid country in the world, and I am as proud as I can be that I belong to it." A visionary in some respects, White predicted "a vast change" soon overtaking India when there would be the "utter disintegration of native society" and its replacement by another "on the European model." He was confident that the Brahmins would be in the vanguard of this movement, and he wanted the Eurasians and Europeans to play their part in this transformation.⁷⁷

The wooing of these three communal groups, at a time when they were each trying to express their identity in their own distinctive way, was without doubt the most challenging task that faced the Congress leaders in South India. As early as March 1887, the *Hindu* put out its first feelers for Muslim cooperation in the forthcoming Congress. It claimed that except in North-Western Provinces and Calcutta, Hindus and Muslims were living on terms of amity, and it called upon Muslim leaders sympathetic to the Congress to persuade their friends who indulged in the "present most uncharitable and unwise crusade against their Hindu brothers" to discontinue their campaign. Imputations about the disloyalty of the Congress were vigorously denied, and Muslims were assured that with their cooperation the Congress would be able to formulate a "loyal and moderate programme."⁷⁸

Behind-the-scene consultations to mobilize support of all the communal and factional groups in the Madras Presidency began in April 1887. Early in the month, the third provincial conference was held at Kumbaconam, and the leaders of the Madras Mahajana Sabha took advantage of this opportunity to meet their counterparts from the *mofussil* to discuss "the general plan" of organizing the forthcoming Congress meeting. It was agreed that "the only means of obtaining the requisite funds was by a

wide and complete organisation which would commit every district and every taluk to a vigorous co-operation with the Central Committee at Madras."⁷⁹

In Madras itself, the leaders of minority groups, prominent members of the landed aristocracy, and the elder administrators were contacted for support. Response was almost everywhere favorable, and in May a public meeting was held to elect a Reception Committee on whose shoulders fell the responsibility for arranging the Congress meeting at the end of the year. Among those who agreed to serve in this Committee were Humayun Jah Bahadur and Mahomed Abdullah Badsha, President and Vice-President of the Central Mahomedan Association, Syed Mahomed Nizamuddin, Secretary of the Anjuman-i-Mufidi-Ahal-i-Islam, B. Lavery and B. H. Chester, members of the Eurasian and Anglo-Indian Association of Southern India, Pulney Andy and Subramaniam, prominent members of the Indian Christian community, Madava Rao, who was elected Chairman of the Reception Committee, and G. N. Gajapati Rao, a wealthy zamindar from Vizagapatam and a member of the Madras Legislative Council.⁸⁰

The first round in the battle to win general support was decidedly in favor of the Congress leadership. Not only had the most important leaders of the minority groups in Madras thrown in their support for the Congress, but, also, such "conservative" stalwarts of Madras politics as Madava Rao and Gajapati Rao--who had so far kept aloof from political involvement--had agreed to take a prominent part in the coming Congress.

However, it ought to be stressed that these leaders were not acting upon any mandate from their constituents or associations; theirs was an expression of their personal inclinations. Consequently, in the months ahead, they had the task of persuading their immediate supporters to back the Congress and to participate in the gathering of December 1887. Of the three communal groups, only the Indian Christians appeared to be in any clear unanimity in their support for the Congress. The

Eastern Star, organ of the National Church, claimed that communal relations in the Presidency had always been cordial and there had been a certain readiness among the leaders to work together to realize common objectives. It looked upon the Congress as a forum to cement the spirit of communal goodwill by representing faithfully the grievances of the people of India as a whole.⁸¹ When meetings were held to elect delegates, most of the prominent leaders of the Indian Christian community were chosen, including Subramaniam, Pulney Andy, Jagga Rao Pillay, and Paul Peter Pillay. Eventually, eleven Indian Christians from South India attended the *tamasha* in December 1887.⁸²

The center of interest, however, were the Muslims. Ever since the Congress emerged as the champion of all-India interests, the Muslim press in Madras had made occasional sallies against this claim and at times had called upon its community to keep aloof from the movement. But, on the whole, Muslim opposition to the Congress had been rather muted, reflecting to some extent the indecision of the Muslim associations in the Presidency. The latter, not under any pressure to take sides, had taken the path of least resistance by remaining silent.

However, the situation was different in 1887, with the Congress leaders displaying zealousness to win Muslim backing and prevent the kind of secession that occurred at the last Congress when Muslim leaders from Aligarh and Calcutta refused to participate. Their first move was to enroll the Muslim notables in Madras and this was carried out with considerable success when the latter agreed to serve in the Reception Committee. The next step was to get the Muslim associations to nominate delegates, and directives to this effect were issued by the Reception Committee in October 1887. Simultaneously, pro-Congress organs launched a campaign calling upon the different minority groups to participate and show that there was all-India solidarity despite differences in creed, caste, and language.

This, in effect, was the real moment of decision for the many Muslims in South India who had thus far been quiescent. It was also the moment for those Muslims who had misgivings about the Congress and its motives to make public their feelings.

It was Ahmad Mohidin, editor of the *Muslim Herald*, who first raised his voice against Muslim participation in the Congress. He had once served the Prince of Arcot, but in October 1884 he entered journalism by starting the *Muslim Herald* to represent "the views and wants of the Muhammadans" of South India.⁸³ An active participant in Muslim politics, he had been Secretary of the Anjuman-i-Islamiah and on its dissolution became a leading member of the Central Mahomedan Association. In August 1887 he visited Nellore to enlist local support for starting a branch body of the Central Mahomedan Association, and in his speech stressed the importance of Muslim unity to secure the interests of the community.⁸⁴

Like many Muslim leaders, Ahmad Mohidin believed that the community had not received a fair share of official appointments in South India. At one point he published details in his paper about Muslim aspirants for office who possessed the necessary qualifications, but was disappointed when the authorities failed to respond. However, when the Public Service Commission assembled in Madras in February 1887, he discussed with his Muslim friends the kind of demands which the community as a whole should make for more equitable representation in the administration. They rejected simultaneous examinations and instead urged that Statutory Civilians should be promoted to the Covenanted Service wherever they had shown their worth. At the same time, Ahmad Mohidin and his friends wanted the claims of certain "backward classes," namely, Muslims, Sikhs, Mahrattas, and Rajputs, to be given special consideration, as they had been slow to adapt to the changes introduced by British rule.⁸⁵

On this issue of civil service recruitment, Ahmad Mohidin and his supporters differed

fundamentally with the Congress leaders. If the one veered towards proportionate representation of communities and sects, with the British acting as arbiters in distributing patronage, the other demanded recruitment on the basis of free and impartial competition, unrestrained by any patronage, however well meant.

As the outspoken critic of the Congress, Ahmad Mohidin gave vigorous expression to the doubts and apprehensions which some Muslims entertained about the movement. He questioned the very assumptions on which the Congress was founded, ridiculed its tactics and derided its supporters. He argued that many of the demands of the Congress were under official consideration and he felt that little would be gained by harassing the government into taking precipitate action. Also, he doubted the wisdom of such tactics in achieving political goals. "We have often urged," he wrote in the *Muslim Herald*, "that agitation and noise would never suit us; we are glad our co-religionists are of our mind."⁸⁶ Ahmad Mohidin also questioned the Congress claim that India was a nation. "The term is applicable only to a body made up of a people descended from one stock, speaking a common tongue, amenable to a uniform law, and united under one Government."⁸⁷ In India, he argued, the Muslims and Hindus were deeply and irreconcilably divided:

No one would venture to deny [he wrote in the *Muslim Herald*] that the interests of the Indian Muslims and Hindus are more hopelessly divergent than those of the Orangemen and the Ribbonmen of Ireland. From a religious or social point of view, the Musalman differs much more from the Hindu than the Irish Catholic from the Irish Protestant.⁸⁸

Implicit in Ahmad Mohidin's reasoning was the belief that British India was a hothcpotch of nationalities and cultures, nourishing a variety of traditions, languages, and creeds, all held

together by the tenuous circumstance of British rule. Among the clashing loyalties in India was the division between the so-called martial and non-martial races.* The martial races, among whom were included Muslims, Sikhs, and Rajputs, were regarded as the victims of British conquest, robbed of their political power, deprived of their economic strength, and denied their share of high official appointments. On the other hand, the nonmartial races were seen as the real beneficiaries of British rule. The *bhadralok* of Bengal and the Brahmins of South and Western India had, by embracing Western education, secured a strong foothold in the lower and middle reaches of the administration, a position from which they were supposedly manipulating policies and patronage to further their own sectional interests. Other members of these castes had entered the new professions, accumulated wealth, and were exerting influence on the government through the press and political associations. The Congress, as Ahmad Mohidin and his school of thought saw it, was nothing more than yet another ambitious attempt on the part of these nonmartial groups educated in the Western learning to find new levers to exert pressure on the government to gain their own ends. If they were successful, it was feared that the martial races, and particularly the

* A similar distinction was made by Sir Lepel Griffin in a speech he gave at the Gwalior durbar in December 1887. He was reported as saying: "One of the reasons which I urge you, Mahrattas, to utilise the educational advantages which we offer you, is, that you may take your rightful place in India and keep the Bengalis, who are now everywhere very active, in their proper place. You are their superiors in ability, in strength, and in courage. They are only your superiors in noise and volatility. If they should be your leaders, it would be an army of lions commanded by grasshoppers."

Muslims, would face utter ruination.

Ahmad Mohidin's assault on the Congress, and the support that his campaign received from some sections of the Muslim press, did not prove decisive in consolidating Muslim opinion against the Congress; at best, it divided the Muslims between pro-Congress and anti-Congress groups. To some extent, this polarization was the inevitable sequel to the factional rivalries which had bedevilled Muslim politics in Madras since the early eighties. The leadership of the Central Mahomedan Association was clearly divided on this issue and it refrained from giving any clear direction to its members as to whether they ought to participate in the coming Congress sessions. While Humayun Jah Bahadur and Mahomed Abdullah Badsha became delegates, Ahmad Mohidin and Mohidin Sheriff held aloof. The Anjuman-i-Mufid-i-Ahla-i-Islam, on the other hand, accepted the Congress invitation and nominated three delegates, including its Secretary Syed Mahomed Nizamuddin. Eventually fifty-eight Muslims, nominated by associations and public meetings, attended the Madras Congress as delegates.⁸⁹ Of these Muslims, the *Muslim Herald* said: "The Congress is welcome to such adherents, but we must ask its promoters not to parade these perverts as a proof that the Muslims, as a body, have joined their camp."⁹⁰

The Congress also aroused a controversy within the Eurasian community. Ever since White came out in support of the Ilbert Bill, two shades of opinion had existed within the Eurasian and Anglo-Indian Association of Southern India, one accepting White's policy of making common cause with the other Indian communities on issues of mutual interest, and the other wishing to tie its fortunes to those of the Anglo-Indians. Although the latter repeatedly criticized White's "pro-Native policy" and even challenged his leadership of the Association at times, it was unable to change the policy so long as White and his close associates kept a tight rein on the leadership of the Association.

White had always evinced a strong sympathy for the Congress, although his status as a public servant stood in his way of active participation in its proceedings. He was a friend of Hume, had been impressed with Ripon's policy, and had cultivated connections with Congress leaders in Madras and Bombay. He attended the first Congress at Bombay in the capacity of *amici curiae*. Hence, there was optimism in Congress circles in Madras that he would persuade the Eurasians to join the movement. The *Eastern Guardian*, which echoed White's political views, had been a steady advocate of Eurasian participation in the Congress. It claimed in April 1887 that the Congress was "a forcible exponent of the patriotism and desire for political reform" in India. "It would be unwise," it remarked, "to stand aloof from the great movement that is going forward or to allow personal jealousies or race prejudices to retard the progress of events."⁹¹

However, for over a month after receiving a formal invitation to participate in the Congress sessions, no decision was taken by the Eurasian and Anglo-Indian Association, reflecting to some extent the indecision arising from White's absence in Calcutta in connection with the report of the Public Service Commission. It was left to Hume, who arrived in Madras on 30 November to look after his "special pet child the Congress,"⁹² to stir the Eurasian leaders into some kind of action. With the help of Gantz, the Vice-President of the Association, a meeting of members was held on 7 December at which the Association agreed to participate in the Madras Congress. Five members, including Gantz, Chester, and Lavery, were nominated as delegates.⁹³

Attempts were also made to enlist the support of the Europeans of South India. Hume, in his circular to all Congress committees, had stressed that every community should be persuaded to participate in the Madras Congress, including nonofficial Europeans.⁹⁴ This was in line with the policy

of making the Congress fully representative of every ethnic and social group, although, in the case of the Anglo-Indians, it would also mean that the Congress would have to modify its thesis that the interests of the Europeans and Indians were completely antithetical and irreconcilable. In South India, the Anglo-Indians lacked an association, and Congress leaders decided to recruit individual Europeans known to be sympathetic to their cause. In some instances, Europeans were asked to preside over meetings where delegates to the Congress were elected. According to the *Hindu*, many European missionaries in the districts did in fact do so.⁹⁵ Also, some European lawyers and teachers in Madras evinced sympathy.

Of these, the two conspicuous figures were John Adam and Eardley Norton, both of whom were elected as delegates. John Adam, Principal of Pachaiyappa College, had built up a local renown for his exertions on behalf of commercial and technical education. He held the view that every Englishman in India had "a sacred duty to perform, viz., to maintain the English character, and to stand to his belief in justice and equality."⁹⁶

Eardley Norton was a barrister whose father, J. B. Norton, was warmly remembered by many Hindus in Madras for his espousal of their cause, notably, in advancing Western education at a time when it was still in its infancy in South India. Eardley Norton was born in Madras in 1852, acquired his legal training in England, and joined the Madras bar in 1879. He soon built up a lucrative practice, aided no doubt, by his forensic skill, which lost little of its lustre in a career extending for almost half a century.⁹⁷ A vivid personality, with a love for drama and controversy, Norton's first involvement in local politics was in 1883 when as the "Madras Correspondent of the *Pioneer*" he freely criticized his fellow countrymen for their opposition to the Ilbert Bill. Nor did he hesitate to expose the vagaries of European officials in South India. The editor of the *Hindu*, without being aware of his

actual identity, praised him for his "invaluable service to the native community."⁹⁸ In April 1885, when the issue of volunteering was being discussed throughout India, Norton supported Indian admission in defiance of general European opinion in the country, as he felt that the government ought "to encourage that loyalty among the natives which has given such spontaneous evidence of its activity in Madras."⁹⁹

No doubt, Norton in recent years had witnessed the rising tempo of Indian politics, which he attributed, in his maiden political speech given in September 1885, to "a steadily increasing feeling of discontent" arising from "many legitimate grievances" of the Indian people. He asserted that, if this discontent was not heeded, the Indian authorities would be "precipitating a crisis, of the magnitude of which, I do not believe any member of this or any other Government has an iota of conception." At the same time, he welcomed attempts by the Indians to secure their legitimate rights through the accepted norms of political protest. To Norton, this was a measure of Indians attaining political maturity and responsibility and their "ceasing to be children in leading strings."¹⁰⁰ It was indeed unique for an European in India to hold such political convictions at this stage in the country's political evolution, and this was an important factor in Norton's popularity with the Western-educated class in South India. Consequently, when he declared his open support for the Congress in 1887, it was not entirely unexpected. However, there was no disguising the fact that his accession was one of the more dramatic events of the Madras Congress, and during the next few years Norton was to emerge as the principal Congress spokesman in South India, eclipsing many of the earlier Congress stalwarts.

ALIENATION OF COMMUNAL SUPPORT

The prevalent mood after the Congress gathering of December 1887 was one of euphoria. Congress leaders in Madras were quick to enumerate the significant gains that they had made on this third meeting. First, the landed aristocracy and the ruling Princes of South India had shown their sympathy for the Congress by subscribing liberally to its cause. Then, the expected support of the middle income groups had materialized, with contributions coming from even such far off places as Burma and Singapore. Third, European officials in Madras had shown an attitude of sympathetic neutrality towards the Congress, with the governor, Lord Connemara, throwing a garden party in honor of the delegates.* Last, and most important, the support of the minority groups in the Presidency was secured.¹⁰¹ Congress leaders had been particularly nervous about the Muslims, fearing that the example of Aligarh and Calcutta might be repeated in Madras.

The mood of euphoria in the Congress camp did not last long. Barely had the Congress delegates dispersed from Madras when a fierce controversy started over the issue of Muslim participation in the Congress, sparked off by Syed Ahmad Khan's vigorous denunciation of the movement. In a series of speeches he delivered in North India, Syed Ahmad Khan rekindled many of the fears which the Muslims entertained about the Congress, particularly of the latter's demands for representative institutions and simultaneous civil service examinations.

In South India this was the signal for a renewed campaign against Muslim involvement in Congress activity, spearheaded largely by the Muslim press in Madras. The *Sultan-ul-Akhbar*, an Urdu

* Of the Congress delegates, Connemara confided to the Viceroy: "They seem to be a very loyal and harmless set of people." *Dufferin Collection*, Reel 532, Connemara to Dufferin, 28 December 1887.

paper, described the Congress as a Hindu gathering working in the interests of the Hindus. It claimed that Islam did "not induce its believers to work against Government but since Government took India from the Muhammadans she should help them and give them special advantages in obtaining posts under it."¹⁰² The *Muslim Herald*, in welcoming Syed Ahmad Khan's speeches, hailed them as "the key-note of our policy."¹⁰³

The Congress leadership in Madras was clearly alarmed at the possible effects that Syed Ahmad Khan's rhetoric might have on its Muslim supporters. Eardley Norton, in a speech delivered in Madras in January 1888, provided the counter blast to Syed Ahmad Khan and the editor of the *Muslim Herald*. Of the former, Norton said that he "talked such non-sense in public and he was doing his best to create a breach between the people maliciously and perniciously, like Sir Lepel Griffin." As for Syed's opposition to the reform of the legislatures on the grounds that the Hindus were in the majority and ahead in education, Norton replied: "Are the people to be in a state of collapse until the Mahomedans become M.A.'s and B.A.'s? Should the whole body politic, take a dose of political chloroform until the Mahomedans come to the front?" He also urged his Muslim friends not to be misled by such organs as the *Muslim Herald*, which, according to Norton, indulged in "a series of misrepresentations, which were intentional and wilful even though the Editor himself was present at the Congress." He called upon the Muslims, if they had common sense and self-respect, to "put off their fantasies and rubbish notions and throw their lot in life not only with the Hindus but with Europeans for the purpose of achieving one common end."¹⁰⁴

This was Norton displaying his forensic skill, trading polemics with his Muslim opponents. But, as an attempt at assuaging Muslim fears about the Congress or winning new friends among the uncommitted Muslims, this speech was a decided failure. Norton seemed to have realized this, for, when he

broached the subject again in March 1888, he made a more reasoned, dispassionate plea for Muslim support. He rejected as "absolutely untrue" the thesis of Syed Ahmad Khan that Hindus and Muslims did not see eye to eye on many things. Discussing the demand for representative institutions, Norton explained that such a system of government would not necessarily submerge the voice of the minorities. Nor was Norton convinced that the Hindus would monopolize all the privileges which the Congress was demanding from the government. If there were any disadvantages weighing against the Muslims, he believed that they lay not so much in their numerical inferiority as in their educational backwardness. Norton contended that the remedy to the latter problem lay within the Muslim grasp, and urged Muslims to apply themselves rigorously to attain educational parity with the other communities.¹⁰⁵

Meanwhile, Muslim leaders in Madras, who were opposed to the Congress, were drawing up plans for a public meeting where the issue of Muslim participation would be discussed. After some preliminary meetings to secure the cooperation of "the various sects of Islam residing in Madras," a program was formulated for adoption by the general community. The meeting, held on 28 April 1888, was attended by about one hundred Muslims, including Mahomed Mahmud Khan, Mohidin Sheriff, and Ahmad Mohidin. Conspicuous by their absence were Humayun Jah Bahadur, Mahomed Abdullah Badsha, Syed Mahomed Nizamuddin, and Walji Lalji Sait.

The meeting adopted a number of resolutions, including a vote of regret at the approaching departure of Lord Dufferin. The main resolution related to Muslim participation in the Congress. The meeting agreed that, for "divers reasons," it was not desirable for the Muslims to be identified with the Congress. "It is a mistake," read the resolution, "to think that that movement, as at present constituted and worked, would yield advantage to the Natives of India in general and the Muhammadans

in particular." The meeting also endorsed the stand that Syed Ahmad Khan has assumed on the various political questions affecting the community, and expressed its "entire confidence in the general tenor of his policy." The meeting further recorded that "the disinclination of Musalmans to take part in any political movement set on foot by the Hindus does not imply race antagonism, but is due to a diversity of interests." It was made clear that the Muslims "sincerely hope to live on the best possible terms with their Hindu, Christian and Parsi brethren, whatever the differences as to policy that may prevail."¹⁰⁶

In effect, this was a meeting of Muslims who felt their basic interests threatened by the activities of the Congress. The meeting was also a demonstration of support for Syed Ahmad Khan's efforts to achieve communal solidarity in the country as a whole, while, at the same time, dispelling Congress claims to have captured Muslim support in Madras Presidency. There was no doubt that Muslim opinion on the Congress issue was sharply divided, a situation which led to increasing pressures being exerted on uncommitted Muslims to join one or the other camp.

In some circles, the very intensity of this campaign aroused fears of possible communal violence. One who feared this was Mir Shujaat Ali, a Statutory Civilian in Madras, who argued that the campaign among Muslims was "increasingly fanning the flames of communal animosities." In a two-part article he wrote for the *Hindu* in June 1888, Mir Shujaat Ali appealed for a truce in the agitation that was being conducted among the Muslims, lest it lead to "worse results." On the one hand, he advised those Muslims opposed to the Congress not "to agitate against the Congress." Instead, they should channel their efforts in more creative directions--formulating their political program and indicating where they differed with the Congress leaders. As for the Congress adherents, he recommended caution and moderation in their campaign to

enlist support for their cause, as well as recognition of the existence of an opposition to the Congress.

Analyzing Muslim attitudes towards the Congress, Mir Shujaat Ali asserted that "an overwhelming majority of thinking Musalmans in India have not joined it," though an exception were "the coastal communities of the Bombay side." He attributed this partly to racial differences and partly to Muslim backwardness in Western education. Moreover, Muslim leaders feared that "the ultimate aim of Congress movement is to introduce into India of diverse races and creeds, the political institutions of England of one nationality and religion, because they cannot shut their eyes to the 'colored carriages and numerous other race inflictions imposed by law on the Negro minority of certain States of the great republic of the United States." Nor did he hold much hopes for the future integration of Hindus and Muslims, so deep and fundamental were their differences. Though he believed that Western education might effect a slow change in Muslim attitudes towards the Congress, Mir Shujaat Ali did not expect this to happen for many years, and until such time he wanted the Congress to leave the Muslims alone.¹⁰⁷

Mir Shujaat Ali was not alone in calling for a truce in the campaign to enlist Muslim support for the Congress. M. D. Habibullah, President of the Vellore Literary Society and a supporter of the Congress, also adopted a similar line of reasoning in a speech given at Vellore in June 1889. He asserted that the "majority of Musalmans" did not support the Congress. "A Tyabji and a Bhimji, names however prominent in themselves, do not make up the whole community of Islam nor even the more influential portion of it." Ascribing Muslim aloofness to their educational backwardness, Habibullah urged his Congress friends to leave the Muslims alone.

They will be a burden to you. They will impede your way, they will mar your progress, leave

them alone, and when the Promethean spark of knowledge has entered into and revived the dead bones of Muslim society they will join you unasked and unsolicited.¹⁰⁸

Such advice, though distasteful to many Congress leaders, did compel some rethinking on the existence of Muslim opposition to the Congress. John Adam, while discussing "the Muhammadan question" in May 1888, conceded that the Muslims were deeply divided on the Congress issue. While urging the Congress workers to resolve this Muslim dilemma as far as possible, Adam also expressed the desirability of recognizing the existence of an opposition to the Congress. He felt that Syed Ahmad Khan had been "rather badly treated" for expressing his views, and emphasized the "great advantage" of having an opponent who was "no hidden enemy."¹⁰⁹ With the formation of the United Indian Patriotic Association in August 1888, aimed at rallying anti-Congress forces in the country, the existence of an opposition to the Congress could no longer be denied.

However, further setbacks lay in store for the Congress leadership in South India. In January 1888 the draft constitution of the Congress, framed by a committee set up at the Madras gathering, was published, providing a body of rules to regulate the working of the Congress. The draft constitution recommended the division of the provincial "Congress circles" into a number of "electoral circles," based partly on the territorial principle and partly on the representation of special and minority interests. Each of these electoral circles was to be placed under the immediate control of a subcommittee, with those constituted on the territorial principle expected "to secure a fair representation of the intelligent portion of the community, without distinction of creed, caste, race, or color."¹¹⁰

While the other provinces were debating the merits of the draft constitution, the Madras

Standing Congress Committee decided to implement that part of the constitution which called for the formation of electoral circles. The entire Madras Presidency was divided into forty-three electoral circles, thirty-six based on the territorial principle, and seven representing special and minority interests. Those electoral circles formed on the territorial basis consisted "either of portions of a large city, a large town, a town with a portion of the surrounding district, or a town with the whole of the district of which it is the capital."¹¹¹ The process of forming subcommittees in each of these electoral circles proved to be a slow one, with the urban centers responding more easily than the rural areas. Much of the initiative to form the subcommittees was taken by the Madras Mahajana Sabha and its affiliated associations, with prominent Congress leaders from the metropolis visiting the *mofussil* to stir up local action. Of particular importance was the "political mission" of G. Subramania Iyer. In an extended tour he undertook in July-September 1888, he visited Wallajanagar, Erode, Coimbatore, Lalgudi, Palghat, and Calicut, where he enlisted support for the formation of local subcommittees. By December 1889 the Madras Standing Congress Committee claimed that the formation of subcommittees in the urban areas of South India was complete.¹¹²

However, a mixed response awaited the Congress leaders when they solicited the cooperation of minority and special interests. Invitations were issued to the Eurasian and Anglo-Indian Association, the two Muslim associations in the metropolis, the Madras Chamber of Commerce, the Madras Trades' Association, and the Madras University to constitute themselves into separate electoral circles.¹¹³ There was some optimism that the Chamber of Commerce and the Trades' Association would agree, especially as in recent years they had expressed sympathy for some of the reforms urged by the Congress. But the reaction of these bodies was distinctly hostile. While both rejected the invitation of the

Congress, some members of the Trades' Association expressed their "entire disapproval" of the activities of the Congress.¹¹⁴ This dashed any hopes of securing European participation in the Congress.

If the European abstention was not entirely unexpected, the withdrawal of the Eurasians from the Congress in 1890 came as a surprise to the Congress leaders in the Presidency. Since 1887, when the Eurasian and Anglo-Indian Association had joined the Congress, it had continued to send delegates to the annual Congress sessions and nominated its representatives to sit on the Madras Standing Congress Committee. This policy of partnership with the Congress was, however, unpopular with "a dissentient party" within the Eurasian body, but White's firm control of the leadership made any change of policy impossible so long as he remained at the helm.

However, White died in February 1889, and this dealt a blow to his policy of partnership with the Congress. Gantz, elected as his successor, pledged to continue his predecessor's policy. In defending the policy, which he termed as "cutting adrift from the European and making common cause with the Native," Gantz asserted that the Eurasian leaders were not "rushing headlong from Scylla to Charybdis." On the contrary, he was convinced that the Eurasian minority should "form an essential link in the well woven chain of this great National movement, whose influence has already spread from East to West, from the long suffering and oppressed India to the Land of the brave, and the free, and the just." He declared that the Congress leaders were "neither Nihilists, Communists, Socialists, or Moonfighters," but rather "honest, sober-minded men who have thought out some of the most important political questions of the day, and who, year by year, have met and formulated in moderate and constitutional language our demands for reforms, the reasonableness of which are admitted on all sides."¹¹⁵

Although Gantz's pledge promised a new era of

Eurasian cooperation with the Congress, his policy came to be challenged, both from within and without the Eurasian body. In October 1889 the President of the Anglo-Indian and Eurasian Association of Bengal criticized the Eurasian leadership in Madras for its continued participation in Congress activities. He attributed this policy to the "radical element" that dominated that body, although he felt that "the great majority of the Madras Association have not been persuaded by the eloquence of Mr. White and Mr. Gantz."¹¹⁶ Also, at this juncture, Gantz's policy was challenged by C. S. Crole, a senior official in the Madras Government. While presiding over the anniversary meeting of the Eurasian and Anglo-Indian Association, Crole urged the Eurasians to look towards the European community to realize their aspirations. "It was not to the interest of the Eurasians," remarked Crole, "to throw themselves into the natives. It was their interest to join the Europeans, because the Europeans could get their wrongs redressed." As for the Congress, he believed that it was "a movement for the native races of the country," still very much in its "infancy," and afflicted with "childish ailments."

How far these criticisms weakened Gantz's authority within the Eurasian body is unknown, but what undermined the policy of partnership with the Congress was Gantz's rather abrupt resignation from the Madras Standing Congress Committee in December 1890 following a quarrel over his selection to preside over the sixth session of the Congress at Calcutta. The details of the quarrel are obscure, but Gantz gave the impression that his selection was balked by the attitude of the Congress leadership in Madras. According to the *Madras Times*, Gantz's nomination had been "demurred" at by the Madras leaders who had "taken offence at not having been given the voice they wanted in the election of a President."¹¹⁷

Gantz's withdrawal meant, in effect, the virtual dissolution of the Eurasian connection with

the Congress. White's policy of alliance with the Congress was finally repudiated in September 1891 when the Association formally decided against sending delegates to the coming Congress session at Nagpur.¹¹⁸ The *Eastern Guardian*, while discussing the reversal of White's policy, asserted that the "dissident party" had grown in strength over the years and converted the majority of the members within the Eurasian association to the new policy of noncooperation with the Congress.¹¹⁹

Almost simultaneously, Muslim support for the Congress also began to wane. Since April 1888 the Congress leadership in South India had come to rely on some prominent Muslim leaders, notably, Humayun Jah Bahadur, Mahomed Abdullah Badsha, Syed Mahomed Nizamuddin, and Walji Lalji Sait, to exert its influence on the Muslims of South India. However, this policy suffered as a consequence of the death of some of these Muslim leaders. In June 1891 Mahomed Abdullah Badsha died, and the *Hindu* mourned the "irreparable loss" to South India of "an ardent supporter of the national cause" who during the Madras Congress in 1887 had "laboured hard to convince his co-religionists of the reasonableness of Congress proposals and converted many to his opinions."¹²⁰ Another blow to the Congress was the death of Humayun Jah Bahadur in December 1893. He had been the patriarchal leader of the Muslims in South India for almost a generation and had remained loyal to the Congress since his accession in 1887. In September 1893 his Congress friends in the Madras Legislative Council had secured his election to the Supreme Legislative Council, but death intervened before he was able to take his seat. The *Hindu* regarded him as "a highly cultured man, with a shrewd common sense" whose death would be a loss to his community in South India.¹²¹

Muslim attitudes towards the Congress were also affected by the latter's ability to win certain concessions from the British rulers. The Congress demand for popular representation in the

legislatures was partially granted by the Indian Councils Act of 1892. The expanded provincial legislatures were to include a sizable number of nonofficials "recommended" by statutory bodies and certain class interests. According to the rules framed and published by the Madras Government in April 1893, seven seats in the local council were to be filled by this process of recommendation by local bodies, mercantile interests, and the Madras University. The remaining seats were to be occupied by nominees of the government, who were to be selected "in such a manner as shall secure a fair representation of the different classes of the community."¹²²

The Muslims were assured of a seat, as were the landed aristocracy, but these arrangements did not satisfy the Muslims. On the one hand, those Muslims who had consistently opposed the introduction of the elective system for fear of Hindu domination felt aggrieved that any change along these lines should have been contemplated. To them, the system of recommendation was only a covert form of election which would allow Hindus already dominating local bodies in the metropolis and *mofussil* to return their own representatives to the legislature. Moreover, the British decision to reform the legislatures was regarded in Muslim circles as a concession to Congress agitation. The Muslims were aggrieved that their loyalty had not been rewarded: they still had only one seat in the Madras legislature, and, even here, they had to be content with allowing the government the sole right of choosing the Muslim member unfettered by the wishes of the community.¹²³

It was at this juncture, in June 1893, that the House of Commons passed a snap resolution calling upon the Indian authorities to implement the Congress demand for simultaneous civil service examinations. The Congress leaders were jubilant, and they organized countrywide meetings to demonstrate the nation's "entire satisfaction at the verdict of the House of Commons, and press earnestly for

"immediate practical application" of the resolution.¹²⁴ In Madras, a mass meeting was convened by the Madras Standing Congress Committee in August 1893, and the gathering resolved that simultaneous examinations were an absolute necessity "not only to satisfy the legitimate aspirations of the people of India, but also to ensure the adequate fulfilment of the promises contained in the Proclamation of 1858." A memorial to Parliament was adopted, welcoming its resolution and urging its immediate implementation.¹²⁵

To Muslim leaders in South India, already critical of British intentions, the Commons' resolution was yet another example of British retreat in the face of Congress clamor. For many years, Muslim leaders in Madras had declared their opposition to simultaneous examinations on the grounds that it would lead to the transfer of the highest executive positions in the country from the hands of the British, the "neutral class," to the Hindus. Not surprisingly, the Muslim press reacted angrily to the Commons' resolution. The *Jarida-i-Rozgar*, an Urdu weekly, argued that the implementation of this resolution would only strengthen the position which the *bhadralok* of Bengal and the Brahmins of South India already enjoyed in certain levels of the administration. It claimed that these groups were "inimically opposed towards the Muhammadans" and would subject them to "all sorts of trouble and annoyance."¹²⁶ Similar sentiments were also expressed by some Anglo-Indian newspapers. The *Madras Times*, in an editorial, argued that if the wishes of the "English Radical" were to be met, Indian administration would be "almost entirely Hindu." It went on to remark:¹²⁷

But the onus of opposing 'Native opinion' would be thrown upon the Musulman instead of the Englishman, and we doubt not that the former would gladly do what he considered to be his duty. The most ardent believer in progress in India cannot seriously argue that the time

is ripe for a very rapid expansion of Hindu influence in the administration, more especially in the executive branch. It must never be forgotten that the Hindu has to deal with the Mahomenadan as well as the Englishman; if he contrives to get more of his own way with the latter than is at present given, he may have to reckon with the former in a fashion that is now, happily, out of date.

The protest meeting of the Madras Muslims against the Commons' resolution was held on 26 August 1893. In a memorial adopted at the meeting, the Muslims described the demand for simultaneous examinations as embodying "the political aspirations of Hindus only, or, with more exactitude, of those two sections known as the Bengalis and the Brahmans." Protesting against any concession to this "microscopic minority," whose aim was "at nothing short of a complete extinction ultimately of the European element in the Civil Service," the Muslim memorialists urged the Indian authorities to ignore the Commons' resolution.

Some speakers at this meeting also voiced the concern felt in Muslim circles about the radical English support for the Congress. Mohamed Yasin was reported as saying:

India was divided into two camps; one consisting of the Moslem moderates who were willing to leave the progress of the country in the hands of the rulers, and the other the red-hot radicals, who claimed the most comprehensive surrenders, supported by a class of English cranks, who were justly charged by a facetious English journal with 'breathless benevolence.'

Yasin claimed that since the advent of the Congress there had been "much wilful misrepresentation" about Indian affairs, with the *bhadralok* in Bengal and the Brahmins in South India "arrogating to themselves the power of controlling the destinies of

the country" by maintaining that "the only legitimate opinion was their own opinion." He also accused the Congress of trying "to delude the world into the belief that there was no political differences between the Mahomedans and the Hindus, and to that end stray Mahomedans had been picked up from the highways and by-ways, and ostensibly paraded on the Hindu platform." Although Hindus had shown skill in organization, he asserted that Muslims would not join them "for the purpose of furthering political ends by means of agitation."¹²⁸

Even if political agitation remained distasteful to Muslim leaders, there was nevertheless some rethinking of the kind of overall strategy they should adopt in countering the Congress. More so than ever before, with escalating Hindu demands and an apparent weakening in the resolve of the British rulers, Muslim leaders came to recognize the importance of inner cohesion. Factional differences among the Muslims in Madras had robbed their leaders of the authority to speak for the community as a whole, and had even enabled the Congress to pit them against each other. Hence, soon after the meeting of August 1893, when almost all shades of Muslim opinion had come together, Muslim leaders in the metropolis began discussions to find some ways of resolving their past dissensions. By February 1894 an agreement was reached, and a circular was issued to launch a new body to embrace all Muslim factions in the city. This circular carried the signatures of seven Muslim leaders, among them, Walji Lalji Sait and Syed Mahomed Nizamuddin, both of whom were long identified with the Congress and had served in the Madras Standing Congress Committee. The circular claimed that recent events, notably, the simultaneous examinations issue, had revealed the need "to organise some schemes that will concentrate Muslim opinion." The apathy of the community as a whole was deplored, but the proposed association was intended to channel Muslim energies to the political, social, and moral advancement of the community and to arrest the

progressive deterioration in its condition. The circular also gave expression to Muslim dissatisfaction with some aspects of official policy, although it was not the intention of the new association to imitate the methods of the "Indian Radicals."¹²⁹ The Central Mahomedan Association, as the new body was called, was formally inaugurated in March 1894.¹³⁰

Almost simultaneously, Muslims in the *mofussil* were showing a similar capacity for unity and organization. Responding to the call of the Mahomedan Educational Conference to organize "educational Anjumans" to further the cause of Muslim education, leaders in the *mofussil* had hastened to form such bodies, which in most instances were the only tangible expression of Muslim concern for their community's problems. By 1894 almost every center of Muslim concentration in the Presidency, including, Dindigul, Vizianagram, Cuddapah, Madura, Trichinopoly, and Salem, could boast of its own educational association. Here was Muslim communal solidarity in its incipient form, finding manifestation largely as a counterpoise to the "Hindu" Congress.

The extent to which the Congress had lost the support of the minority groups in South India was brought into sharp relief when the tenth session met in Madras in December 1894. The local reception committee, hoping to emulate the feat of 1887, exerted all its influence to secure the participation of the various minority groups in South India. The only positive response came from the Indian Christians, with many of their leaders serving in the reception committee.¹³¹ The Eurasian and Anglo-Indian Association declined the invitation, adhering loyally to the decision it had taken in 1891.

The focus of Congress efforts, however, was the Muslims. But the Central Mahomedan Association ended any hopes of Muslim participation when it resolved in October 1894 that all Muslims should "hold rigidly aloof," on the grounds that the Congress was "not conducive to the general political welfare of the country, nor to the special

interests of the Mahomedan community."¹³² Although eighteen Muslims eventually attended the meeting from various parts of South India, the important leaders were conspicuous by their absence. Rangiah Naidu, Chairman of the Reception Committee, conceded in his welcoming speech to all delegates that "an important section of our Mahomedan fellow-countrymen have stood aloof of our movement."¹³³

The secession of the Muslims reflected the problems of the Congress in trying to resolve some of the contradictions inherent within Indian society. Since 1887, when the annual session of the Congress was held in Madras, the Hindu politicians in the city had made an ambitious drive to broaden the base of the nationalist movement by incorporating the minority groups in South India. Though this drive seemed to have made some headway initially, in the long run it only brought to the surface the underlying antagonisms that existed between the various ethnic and religious groups in the Presidency. The Hindu politicians, despite their political sophistication and organizational skills, were unable to reconcile the conflicting aspirations which informed the actions of these minority groups. Hence, even before the nineteenth century drew to a close, the politics of communal separatism had begun to obstruct the integrative role of territorial nationalism in South India.

7. Hindu Revivalism and the Age of Consent Bill Controversy

The search for minority support was not the only problem which the Congress encountered during the early years of its existence. No less troublesome was the problem of reaching accommodation with the protagonists of social reform, who, since the Congress first met in 1885, had become increasingly vocal in demanding the inclusion of social issues on its agenda. Reformers, like B. M. Malabari, the Parsi editor of the *Indian Spectator* of Bombay, and Raghunatha Rao of Madras, often reminded their political counterparts that the Congress, if it aspired to become a truly national assembly, could scarcely deny social reform its due place in its debates. The Congress leadership resisted such arguments by asserting, as Dadabhai Naoroji did in his presidential address to the second Congress in December 1886, that an all-India gathering, such as the Congress, was hardly the forum to discuss the traditions, customs, and prejudices of a country as sharply segmented as India was by differences of creed, caste, and language. "A National Congress," Naoroji declared, "must confine itself to questions in which the entire nation has a direct participation and it must leave the adjustment of social reforms and other class questions to class Congresses."¹

Implicit in Naoroji's argument was the fear

that the Congress had not attained sufficient organizational strength to bear the strains which the discussion of social issues was bound to create. M. G. Ranade, whose political instincts convinced him that this fear was real, was, however, not prepared to accept Naoroji's thesis that social change could only be attained through sectional and class organizations. "We are in a sense," Ranade told his social reform friends in 1888, "as strictly national socially, as we are politically. Though the differences are great for purposes of immediate and practical reform, yet there is a background of common traditions, common religion, common laws and institutions and customs and perversions of such customs, which make it possible to deliberate together in spite of our differences."² And it was Ranade, aided by a few other social reformers, who brought into existence the National Social Conference in December 1887 to provide a platform to debate reformist issues of an all-India character.

Although the Social Conference was modelled on the Congress, and it met annually alongside the Congress, sharing facilities and even delegates, this was a compromise arrangement between two unequal parties. The Social Conference found itself in a subordinate relationship to the Congress. That the Congress leadership accepted this arrangement was doubtless inspired by the desire to relieve itself of charges from friendly and hostile quarters that it was neglecting social problems. However, such an arrangement did not always exempt the Congress from becoming embroiled in social issues. The best-known instance of such involvement was the controversy that erupted in 1890 over the Age of Consent Bill. Although the Congress in its collective capacity successfully resisted pressures to take a stand on this issue, it was a decision which failed to satisfy those Congress politicians who had become deeply involved in the controversy. In South India, as in many other parts of the country, the Age of Consent Bill provoked a stormy debate in which prominent Congress leaders found

themselves in opposing camps. To grasp the nature and implications of this controversy, it is important to know something of a new phenomenon which was making its influence felt in the Presidency at this juncture, namely, Hindu Revivalism.

HINDU REVIVALISM

For much of the nineteenth century, Hinduism was on the defensive against a variety of pressures released by the Western impact. First, there was the challenge of the Christian missions, who made no secret of their desire to destroy Hinduism and its social institutions. Second, there were the disintegrative features associated with certain British policies. In their efforts to outlaw practices which they deemed repugnant to decency and humanity, the British authorities enacted laws which impinged upon long-established usages associated with Hinduism. A third source of pressure came from reformist-minded Hindus, mostly those who were educated in high schools and colleges and who had imbibed the rationalist teachings of Western philosophy and science. They were critical of many aspects of their traditional religious system, and some called for a thoroughgoing reformation in order to do away with such notions as pollution and untouchability, and to minimize the rigors of infant marriage and enforced widowhood. Some educated Hindus, like the Veda Samajists, even contemplated the formation of a theistic Hindu church where sectarian divisions would be disavowed and idolatry discarded. Hinduism, attacked from various quarters, found little intellectual succor, even from its own adherents, during the 1860s and 1870s. Not surprisingly, some observers discerned "the visible signs" of its waning vitality, reflected in its decaying temples, the ignorant pundits, the corrupt priesthood, and factious temple committees presiding over the spoliation of their rich endowments.³

However, despite such gloomy portrayals of the future Hinduism, few ventured to predict its ultimate overthrow. Such expectations had vanished by the 1850s when Hinduism successfully weathered the massive assault of the Christian missions. The British rulers, despite legislation against certain taboos associated with Hinduism, had achieved surprisingly little in changing the matrix of social and religious rites of the Hindus. The caste system, with all its harsh inequalities and its offensive concepts about pollution and untouchability, had shown resilience and even found new modes of expression through more effective and extended caste organization, helped no doubt by modern communications. Popular Hinduism, with its interminable family and communal rites, had lost none of its hold upon the Hindu masses. Indeed, the introduction of rail communications further popularized Hindu festivities, notably, visits to sacred shrines in different, and sometimes, remote parts of the country. Even Western-educated Hindus, despite their intellectual skepticism and radical outpourings in the press and on the platform, rarely missed out in these family and communal ceremonies. Be they Brahmins or non-Brahmins, matriculates or graduates, administrators or lawyers, they continued to adhere faithfully to many of the time-honored customs, particularly the laws governing commensality and marriage.

One complaint frequently heard about the Western-educated Hindus was their lack of enthusiasm or conviction in their religion. It was often said that they discharged their religious responsibilities without any conception of their origin or significance. Many ascribed this to the secular education that they received in state schools. The obsessive concern of parents to send their children to such schools, the latter's anxiety to pass the numerous and exacting examinations, and their eagerness to find a vocation and make a success of it had left them with little time or energy to become acquainted with their religion. This was true as

much of the Brahmin as non-Brahmin youth, although in the case of the former they would have learned by rote some relevant stanzas from the Vedas to be able to recite them at their daily prayers, though in many cases the true meaning of what they recited escaped them.

It was a state of affairs which led to demands from certain Hindu circles, beginning in the late 1870s, for some kind of religious instruction in schools. Some argued that, unless this was done, the government would be turning out a class suffused with religious skepticism, even "downright atheism," and the consequences would be dangerous not only to the established social order but also to the long-term political security of the British Raj.⁴ Some believed that the fault lay with the Hindu pundits whose failure to provide a meaningful intellectual exposition of their religion had lost them the respect of the Western-educated class. It was asserted that, unless the pundits could generate some kind of intellectual debate, Hinduism could not conceivably rally the support of its most intelligent and active adherents.⁵ This debate, oddly enough, was initiated during the early 1880s by a foreign agency, the Theosophical Society.

Founded in New York in 1875 by Colonel H. S. Olcott and Madame H. P. Blavatsky, this Society, in the words of one of its founders, aimed at three main objectives: "to promote a feeling of brotherhood among men, regardless of race, creed, or colour; to promote the study of Aryan and other religions, philosophies, and sciences; and to promote experimental research into the hidden laws of Nature and the latent capabilities of man."⁶ In 1879 the Society shifted its headquarters to Bombay, presumably to pursue its inquiry into the esoteric teachings of Indian religions. As Olcott explained in his first major lecture to an Indian audience in March 1879, a search into the early literatures of the East, especially of countries like India, Egypt, Tibet, and Persia, was expected to reveal "the occult laws of nature," which in turn would provide

some of the answers to the unresolved puzzles of Western science.⁷

The Theosophical Society, because of its professions and because it was founded by two Westerners of somewhat obscure background, was bound to attract attention in an India whose own cultural and literary legacy had long been at a discount and where interest in the "natural phenomena," about which Blavatsky had written at length in her *Isis Unveiled*, had always been deep rooted. Consequently, on their arrival in Bombay, the Theosophist leaders were flooded with queries, emanating as much from Indians as Europeans, from friends as from critics, and from North as from South India. Many of these genuine queries were answered in public lectures, social gatherings, and through the columns of the Society's journal, the *Theosophist*.

Some hostile critics had also to be answered. One story that gained wide currency was that Olcott and Blavatsky were Russian spies seeking to subvert British rule in India. Olcott assured the government in 1879: ". . . our existence threatens no Government, feeds no political cabal, attacks no pillar of social order."⁸ A request was also made to the Indian authorities to free the Society from police surveillance, and this was acceded to in 1880.⁹ Olcott also felt constrained to clarify the Society's association with the natural phenomena. He claimed that many Indians saw the Society as "a miracle club" and wished to join it "to get their fill of wonders." If they were disappointed, they cast aspersions upon the Society and abused its founders. Olcott felt compelled to come to the defence of Blavatsky. He felt that her critics had slandered her most unjustly: "See this great, generous-hearted soul, filled with love for humanity; longing to throw light into the darkened minds of those who still believe in miracles, and still clank the chains of superstition; devoting her life, sacrificing the sweets of home, and family and ease, and a high social position, to go about the world

in search of truth, and spreading it so that all may partake."¹⁰

Although miracles and occult science continued to receive attention, the Theosophist appeal in India stemmed largely from Olcott's exposition of the country's great achievements in the past, the causes of its present plight, and the panacea for its future regeneration. In his lecture tou~~ch~~ to various parts of the country, and in his orations at the anniversary meetings of the Society, Olcott entered into lengthy disquisitions about the grandeur of India's early achievements in religion, science, and philosophy. He contended that the researches of Sir William Jones had led the way into the "splendid garden of Sanskrit literature" which astonished the West with "its glorious flowers of poesy, its fruits of metaphysics and philosophy, its crystalline rivulets of science, [and] its magnificent structures of philology." Then, the researches of Max Muller and other Sanskrit scholars of the contemporary generation had given substance to the theory that "Aryavarta was the cradle of European civilization, the Aryans the progenitors of the Western peoples, and their literature the source and spring of all Western religions and philosophies." Olcott believed that with further intensive research the world would come to know "the whole truth about Aryan civilization."

Turning from the past to contemporary India, Olcott found it difficult "to escape a sense of crushing despair." He asked: "Where are the sages, the warriors, the giant intellects of yore? Where the happiness, the independence of spirit, the self-respecting dignity, that made an Aryan feel himself fit to rule the world, nay, to meet the very gods on equal terms?" Instead, Olcott saw poverty, starvation, and famine. There was disunity: "province is arrayed against province, race against race, sect against sect, brother against brother"; the big cities of the past had crumbled; the hallowed repositories of religion were in ruins; the Brahmins served in menial professions as clerks

and merchants, while those in temples "repeat their slokas and sastras in a parrot-like way." The youth of the country were "turning materialists under the influence of European educators," wholly ignorant of their grand past heritage.

While drawing this portrait of contemporary India, Olcott did not extinguish all hopes for regeneration. His panacea for the country's ills was the dissemination of Aryan science and religion, especially the Vedas. "An Indian civilization resting upon the Vedas," Olcott said, "and other old national works, is like a strong castle built upon rocks." He stressed that the new edifice must have "a strictly national character. Whoever is a true friend of India will make himself recognized by his desire to nationalise her modern progress; her enemy is he who advocates the denationalization of her arts, industries, lines of thought, and aspirations." He placed high hopes on Western education which he believed would create "*a new class which is to guide the nation up the hill.*" If the existing political stability continued, and positions of trust in the government were increasingly thrown open to Indians, Olcott felt that the existing barriers that had kept Indians apart would be removed:¹¹

Gradually they are realizing that, however distant the Punjab may be from Travancore, or Cutch from Bengal, the people are yet brothers, children of the same mother. When this conviction shall once possess the whole body of these twenty-four crores then will the renascence of this nation have indeed arrived.

The activities of the Theosophist leaders had attracted attention in South India, but actual contact with them was only established in October 1881 when Olcott and Blavatsky visited Tuticorin and Tinnevelly in the course of their extended tour to Ceylon. Tinnevelly had the distinction of forming the first branch of the Theosophical Society in

South India, and it was at the invitation of this branch that the Theosophist leaders visited the district. An enthusiastic reception greeted them on their arrival, with leading Hindu officials and priests forming the welcoming party, while the managers of a Siva temple in Tinnevelly invited them to visit its inner precincts where Olcott lectured to a large audience. Called the "American Pundit," Olcott impressed Hindu listeners with his "deep erudition, extraordinarily instructive and impressive orations, soldiery and venerable appearance, and pleasing deportment."¹²

But, rather predictably, the visitors ran into opposition from the Christian missionaries who distributed leaflets attacking Theosophy and its organizers.¹³ Olcott, replying to his critics, asserted that ever since the Society was organized its founders had been pursued by "the bigots of Christian theology." He alleged that it was "these insatiate enemies that have set police spies to track our footsteps throughout India; that have charged us with being adventurers; that have circulated numberless lies about us; that have forged letters we never wrote."

In a speech at Tuticorin, Olcott launched a frontal assault on Western civilization for its materialism, for its addiction to opium and liquor, and for its aggressive instincts which had led to wars and subjugation of weaker nations. Christianity might have an excellent moral code, argued Olcott, but that was not the real test of the quality of a civilization:

Christendom has as fine a moral code as could be wished for; but she shows her real principles in her Krupp and Armstrong guns and whiskey distilleries, in her opium ships, sophisticated merchandise, prurient amusements, licentiousness and political dishonesty. Christendom we may almost say, is morally rotten and spiritually paralysed.¹⁴

The visit to Tinnevelly district, lasting only four days, was too brief for the Theosophists to make any great impression on the Presidency as a whole. However, Olcott and Blavatsky decided to follow up this modest beginning by undertaking in April 1882 a six-week tour of South India. In Madras Olcott reiterated what he had been preaching in other parts of the country. He appealed to the "old men and young men of Madras" to cooperate with the Society in its task of working for the restoration of India's "ancient religion, for the vindication of her ancient glory, for the maintenance of her greatness in science, in the arts, [and] in philosophy."¹⁵ This appeal found a response, and a Madras Branch of the Theosophical Society was organized, with Reghunatha Rao as President, G. Muthusamy Chetty and P. Srinivasa Rao, both Judges of the Court of Small Causes, as Vice-Presidents, and T. Subba Rao, a Vakil in the High Court, as Secretary. Later, Olcott and Blavatsky travelled to Nellore and Guntur, among other places, and branch bodies were formed there as well. Their reception, even in such remote places as Guntur, exceeded their expectations, with large crowds turning out to give them an enthusiastic welcome. In Nellore, an address of welcome was presented to them in which the Theosophist leaders were praised for their devoted efforts "to regenerate the Indian natives by reviving their recollection of the scientific glory of their country which once in times of yore, shone forth in radiant lustre, but which, owing to the progress of a well-known cycle in the destinies of nations, has been practically over-darkened some centuries past."¹⁶

It was during this visit that the possibility of shifting the Society's headquarters to Madras was discussed with local leaders. As Olcott later recorded, the Society had been in financial difficulties in Bombay, having to contend with high rent and other charges,¹⁷ and being obviously unable to raise enough subscriptions to meet them punctually. Madras was considered as an

alternative as Theosophy was gaining popularity there. This was reflected in the warm reception that the founders received during their tour, in the fact that Madras was outstripping Bombay in the number of subscribers to the *Theosophist* and the further evidence that the membership of the Madras branch was the largest in India of any single branch.¹⁸ In December 1882, following the first "representative convention of all Indian Branches" held in Bombay,¹⁹ the Society moved to Madras where a commodious building was purchased in Adyar which was, henceforth, to serve as the nucleus of the Society's activities in India and beyond.

The shift to Adyar underlined the determination of Olcott and Blavatsky to exploit their popularity by covering the entire Presidency with a network of Theosophist branches. By January 1883 at least nine centers in South India were known to have organized local branches. Those in Bellary, Palghat, Chingleput, Cuddapah, and Madura had done so at the initiative of local leaders.

Olcott wanted to build on this organization, and, leaving Blavatsky to run the *Theosophist*, he embarked on his crusading tours, which, in the course of the year, took him over seven thousand miles of Indian territory. No place was too remote for him, and his itinerary was not affected either by hot weather or the monsoon. In July-August 1883 he undertook an extensive tour of the Tamil and Malayalam-speaking areas, visiting Trichinopoly, Tanjore, Kumbaconam, Mayaveram, Negapatam, Madura, Srivilliputtur, Tinnevelly, Nagercoil, Trevandram, Palghat, Coimbatore, and Cuddalore. Almost everywhere, he received a warm reception, lectured on Theosophy, and performed some of his miraculous cures.²⁰ Olcott had no illusions as to the reasons for his popularity: "I was the friend and defender of their religion, and had a way of curing the sick that people called the miraculous." In his view, it was this tour which started the Hindu revival in South India when "the backbone of the Indian movement towards Materialism was broken."²¹

Essentially, Theosophy appealed only to the Hindus in South India, especially Brahmins and the higher non-Brahmin castes. Foremost in the work of establishing branches were the members of the professional elite, already prominent in local politics by their participation in municipal affairs and the running of district associations and literary societies. Every branch of the Theosophical Society had a lawyer or a teacher, and the well-known personalities who identified themselves with Theosophy included S. Subramania Iyer, Saminatha Iyer, and Kesava Pillay. Equally important, Theosophy attracted many Hindu officials who had kept aloof from nationalist politics. Almost every branch committee included either a deputy collector, district *munsif*, or *tahsildar*. Much of the financial support for the movement came from the merchant class who had always displayed generosity in supporting cultural and religious activities. Although the names of Hindu priests and pundits are rarely to be found in the list of branch committees, their support for Theosophy was attested by their appearance in parties welcoming the Theosophist leaders and by their invitations to Olcott to deliver his stirring lectures in the precincts of their temples.

Although the appeal of Theosophy among such Hindu groups as priests, pundits, and merchants, was only to be expected, what surprised many observers was the strong support which the movement enlisted from Western-educated Hindus in South India, be they the politically radical younger elements of the professional elite, or their elder counterparts in the administration. Olcott claimed in December 1885, with some justification, that the Society had in its ranks the "flower of Indian people," notably, the Indian intelligentsia, the same class which he labelled some years ago as "the most denationalised."²² T. Madava Rao, writing in the *Madras Times*, attested to the popularity of the movement amongst the educated segment of the Indian people and went on to claim that the

progress in education had created a demand "for some form of general religion as would commend itself to the vast and heterogeneous population of India without a direct or destructive conflict with existing beliefs. Theosophy is acceptable to the educated natives on account of its broad national basis."²³ The *Christian College Magazine*, dissenting from this view, argued that Theosophy had gained "cheap and temporary success by following the obscurantist role, and exalting the past at the expense of the present."²⁴

However, by far the most penetrating analysis into the popularity of the Theosophical Movement came from the editor of the *Madras Mail*. Writing soon after Olcott's remarkably successful tour of South India in July-August 1883, the editor dismissed explanations which attributed the success of the movement to "the native fondness for tamashas" or to the thrust and content of Olcott's lectures. No doubt Olcott's "charming simplicity, a profound belief in himself and in his work" did help the cause, but the editor felt that the real answer to Theosophist success in South India must be sought elsewhere:²⁵

Part of the answer at least is to be found in the undoubted fact that of late years there has been a decided revival of national Indian feeling. In spite of the disintegrating power of caste, which splits the Hindu peoples into so many fragments at constant feuds with each other, a new generation has realised to some extent the truth that Indians ought to be one. The old apologetic tone which characterized the utterances of natives regarding everything Indian a short time ago, has given place to a tone of self-assertion, not quite so pleasant to the ruling class perhaps, but certainly very much more natural and healthy . . . The old school Hindu considered it his duty to take weekly the rebukes of Europeans, and even to esteem them as precious evil. The new

school has no such amiable weakness. European scholars have taught them, not certainly to know their own classics, for that is what few can boast of, but to believe in them. If once it should become possible to regard Hindu literature, science, and religion as ahead of the times, nothing would be wanting to enable the Hindu to boast himself not only as the equal, but as the superior of the European. The hour brought forth the man, and the man was Colonel Olcott.

The fact that the Western-educated Hindus, known for their religious skepticism and disregard for their inherited cultural traditions, should have responded to Theosophy in the way they did can only be explained in terms of their changing attitudes towards British rule in general and Western cultural impact in particular. Since the beginning of the nineteenth century, Indians had been on the defensive politically and culturally, with the British rulers recasting their political and administrative institutions and imposing their own laws and standards of social morality, with Christian missionaries threatening to dismantle the very bases of the Indian social and religious system and to reorder it along Western lines, and with English educationists implanting a system of instruction in India alien not only in content but also in the mode and language of teaching. Indians, by and large, had been passive recipients of this Western cultural package, although they resisted strongly whenever overt attempts were made to interfere in their religious or social usages. One product of this cultural package was the Western-educated class, raised in the ethos of its political masters and sometimes even an instrument in the diffusion of some aspects of this alien culture in the country at large.

The Theosophist leaders arrived in India at a time when the Western-educated Hindus were experiencing the first stirrings of modern political life,

soon to be translated into provincial and all-India organizations and conferences. Although the political models were essentially Western, the politicians who adopted them in India were conscious that their claims for a distinctive Indian identity could not be grounded on borrowed culture, or a culture which they regarded as inferior. National pride required something more, and it was here that the Theosophical Society fulfilled an important role. By discovering, or purporting to discover, the achievements of ancient India in the fields of religion, science, and philosophy, and by extolling the virtues of some of the country's social and cultural traditions, Theosophy breathed a new sense of pride into Hindus and replaced the old myth of India's inferiority with the new myth of superiority. To reinforce this, the Theosophist leaders denounced many aspects of Western civilization, especially the growth of materialism and skepticism. Though such sentiments were by no means novel in India, the fact that they were made by two representatives of the West carried greater conviction. Theosophy had given India's Western-educated class a new sense of self-respect for itself and its country as such. It took to heart Olcott's dictum that "a nation that respects itself can never sink low."²⁶ Herein lay the reason for the popularity of Theosophy during the eighties.

The relationship between Theosophy and Hindu Revivalism, in the form that it emerged in South India at this time, was a direct and intimate one. In drawing attention to India's hoary past, in demanding that the Vedas and Shastras should form the bedrock on which India's future should be built, and in calling for the instruction of the country's youth in their own scriptures, the Theosophical Society had struck at the very core of the Revivalist program, which was to be widely debated during the coming decades. Equally significant, both Olcott and Blavatsky were anxious to mobilize the widespread enthusiasm that they had roused among the Hindus to undertake certain practical

schemes which they believed would give permanence to their work.

One such scheme was the starting of Sanskrit schools. Soon after the Society's headquarters were shifted to Adyar, Olcott gave a lecture to a Madras audience in which he complained that the youth of the country was not being taught "the first principles of their national religion." As a remedy, he suggested the starting of special classes, like the Sunday schools of the Christians, to which Hindu youth could be sent to learn the tenets of their faith. To facilitate teaching, Olcott also indicated that a series of catechisms and readers be compiled, embodying the fundamental principles of Hinduism culled from Sanskrit classics. The proposals were welcomed, and a committee was set up under the chairmanship of Gajapati Rao.²⁷ By July 1883 the committee had finalized plans for starting Sanskrit schools in Triplicane, Mylapore, and Black Town, and the local Theosophists agreed to send their children to these schools before admitting them into English schools.²⁸ The idea also won support in some of the major *mofussil* centres, notably, Madura, Bellary, Nellore, Vizianagram, Trichinopoly, and Guntur, where Sanskrit schools were opened under the auspices of the branch committees of the Theosophical Society.

Far more ambitious, both in conception and execution, was the Adyar Oriental Library. Olcott's grand design for a "national Sanskrit movement" in India revolved mainly around an Oriental library which would attract not only Indian pundits but also Western orientalists. If the scheme succeeded, Olcott had visions of Adyar becoming "a second Alexandria, and on these lovely grounds a new Serapion may arise."²⁹ The library was intended to be a repository of "the best religious, moral, practical, and philosophical teachings of the ancient sages," and he appealed to fellow Theosophists and patriotic Indians to make gifts of such works to the library, where he would edit, translate, and superintend their publication with

the help of learned scholars. At the same time, this institution would also train pundits, and impart to them a more intimate and deeper understanding of their ancient literature and religion, which would enable them to command the respect of the "educated men, especially that of the rising generation." In December 1886 the Adyar Oriental Library was formally opened at a ceremony graced by religious dignitaries from Hinduism, Islam, Buddhism, and Zorastrianism.³⁰

The Theosophical Society also inspired Hindu revivalists to work on their own initiative. A number of revivalist societies sprang up in South India to disseminate the tenets of Hinduism, to purge it of certain impurities accumulated over the centuries, and to find ways to check inroads by other faiths, notably, Christianity. One such society was the Hindu Sabha, founded in 1880 by A. Sankariah, Dewan-Peishkar of Trichur in Cochin State. It professed to promote social and religious reforms among the Hindus with "the support of pundits and priests of social standing," and to eliminate "dogmas, schisms and practices opposed to the consolidation of the Hindu Nation."³¹ Branches of the Sabha were established in some *mofussil* towns, and a monthly journal, called the *Hindu Reformer and Politician*, was started in 1882 to remove misconceptions about the social and religious institutions of the Hindus.³² An appeal was made to all educated Hindus to join, irrespective of their sectarian or caste background, and within two years it claimed a membership of 150 "representing every district, caste and sect and service and occupation."³³ Its published list of members revealed a high proportion of graduates, many of them occupying important positions in administrative, legal, and teaching professions. The Hindu Sabha had also entered into an alliance with the Theosophical Society, and played an active part in the welcome that Olcott and Blavatsky received when they first visited Madras in April 1882.

Working less ostentatiously in the cause of

Hindu Revivalism was Sivasankara Pandiah, a Gujerati Brahmin, who had taken his B.A. in 1878 and then become a teacher in Pachaiyappa High School. A scholar of Sanskrit, Tamil, and Telugu, Pandiah had been influenced by the activities of the Theosophical Society. As he said some years later, it was the Society's "strong and rational advocacy" of India's ancestral faiths which led him to labor for "the moral and spiritual regeneration" of the country.³⁴ He shared the Theosophist dislike of those Hindus who pursued "novelty for novelty's sake" and regarded "everything new as productive of benefits, and everything old as productive of evils." Pandiah was convinced that there was much that was good in Indian society and saw no reason for any servile imitation of the ways of the West. "We have," he said, "the precious stones of social and moral truths at our very doors. We have only to dig them up."³⁵

A person of sincerity and singular dedication, whom Olcott characterized as "an eloquent and intense man,"³⁶ Pandiah emerged during the eighties as one of the leading champions of Hindu Revivalism in South India. He devoted his spare hours to conducting moral and religious classes and compiling readers explaining the basic tenets of Hinduism. At times, his straitened pecuniary circumstances prevented him from publishing some of his works. Partly to overcome this difficulty, Pandiah launched in April 1887 the Hindu Tract Society with the help of some of his close friends. This society pledged itself to "spread Hinduism and to defend it against the attacks of its opponents," while at the same time seeking to promote "the cause of morality and sound learning" among the Hindus.³⁷ Over the next two years, the Hindu Tract Society established branch bodies in the *mofussil* towns, published and distributed numerous tracts on Hinduism, and engaged Hindu preachers to tour the districts.³⁸

With the growth of revivalist societies in South India seeking to spread their message through preachers and tracts, Hinduism began to acquire a

new consciousness of its own strength and a heightened sensitiveness to attacks from any hostile quarter.

This was clearly revealed in the so-called "Christian College Disturbance" of April 1888. A Brahmin student in this leading missionary college of South India, wishing to convert to Christianity, had taken shelter in a missionary's house for fear of "personal violence." His fellow Hindu students, believing that conversion was contemplated without his parents' being consulted, urged the College authorities to postpone baptism. Although the request was conceded, the Hindu students carried their protest a stage further by criticizing College teachers for their methods of teaching scripture. The College authorities rejected these complaints, but, when students in one senior class misbehaved by "uproariously and persistently impeding work," they took disciplinary action by suspending them and imposing a fine.

This sparked off a more widespread "disturbance," with "a riotous throng" swamping the corridors of the College while some students "mobbed" their professors. At this point, the College decided on firmer measures and expelled two students believed to be the ringleaders. This led to a student boycott of classes, with meetings held in which the College authorities were urged to drop punitive action and to readmit the expelled students.³⁹ Two Hindu leaders, Ananda Charlu and Chentsal Rao, met the College principal in an effort to find a settlement without the students being subjected to any "harsh conditions." The Principal seemed to be sympathetic, but the College Council insisted on an apology as a condition of readmission, as well as a fine on those students who had absented themselves during the boycott of classes. The bulk of the students returned to the College after fulfilling these conditions, but some decided to stay away.⁴⁰

This incident and its ramifications can only be understood against the wider setting of

deteriorating relations between Christianity and Hinduism in South India. In its version of the disturbance, the Free Church Mission claimed that in recent years some societies had been waging a campaign against the Christian missions. It alleged that the students were affected by this campaign, and an atmosphere of distrust had been created between missionary teachers and students. In the disturbance of April 1888, the Free Church Mission claimed the protesting students were "stirred up by outsiders" into adopting extreme tactics.⁴¹

There is a germ of truth in this version, but it glosses over the fact that the College authorities and teachers, for their part, had also contributed their share in precipitating the incident. Though teachers in missionary institutions had always in the past made slighting references to Hinduism in their scripture classes, they failed to realize that the immunity that they had long enjoyed from any form of retaliation was coming to an end, notably, since Theosophy and revivalist groups began to preach about India's ancestral religion, science, and philosophy.

In December 1884 at the annual convention of Theosophists, Olcott had supported a resolution calling for the formation in all centers of an "Aryan League of Honour," restricted to youths between ten and twenty-one, in order to meet "a strong feeling of love" which college and high school students had shown for "the cause of Aryan moral regeneration."⁴² This must have come as a surprise to those who believed that the revelations of Madam Coulomb, published recently by the *Christian College Magazine* to "expose the fraudulent nature of the phenomena" associated with the founders of Theosophy,⁴³ would have discredited the Society in general and Blavatsky in particular. Apparently, they did not do so as far as college students in Madras were concerned. In December 1884, when Blavatsky returned to Madras after an overseas visit, students from various colleges in the metropolis, including many from the Madras

Christian College, presented her an address in which they expressed their country's debt to her and Olcott for undertaking "that gigantic labour of love--the vivifying on the alters of Aryavarta the dying flame of religion and spirituality." The students, in this address, also rejected the charges which some teachers of Christian College had made against Blavatsky following the revelations that were published in the College journal.⁴⁴

Thus, it was apparent that many Hindu students were feeling the currents of Theosophy and revivalist fervor which had already affected their parents, and it was not surprising that they chose Christian College as the target to vent their feelings against missionary attacks on their religion.

One Hindu who felt very strongly about this entire episode was Sivasankara Pandiah. In a letter to the *Hindu*, he ascribed the student trouble in Christian College to "the gross insult offered to Hinduism by the bigoted Missionary-Professors." He asserted that the time had arrived for orthodox Hindus to show their patriotism and zeal for their religion by starting "National schools and colleges" throughout the country.⁴⁵ He also announced the establishment of a "Hindu Theological College Fund," designed to raise money to build a national college in Madras where secular and religious instruction would be imparted. Assurances of support had come from many Hindus, and Pandiah appealed to Hindu rulers, zamindars, landholders, merchants, and lawyers to contribute to the fund in order that the proposed college could be started in the following year.⁴⁶

Pandiah's hopes of realizing his scheme depended largely on the reaction of the influential Hindu groups in Madras. Much to his disappointment, Hindu opinion was divided between those who supported him and those who wished to raise Pachaiyappa College from a second to a first-grade college. Pandiah, himself, was not opposed to the elevation of Pachaiyappa College, but he felt that

this move by itself was inadequate to combat Hindu dependence on missionary educational institutions.⁴⁷ In May 1888 a public meeting was held in Madras, attended by, among others, Madava Rao, Raghunatha Rao, Ananda Charlu, and G. Subramania Iyer, to discuss the rival proposals, and it was then decided that it would be more expedient to strengthen Pachaiyappa College rather than embark on a fresh venture.⁴⁸ This was a blow to Pandiah's hopes and, to aggravate matters, he was forced to resign his position in Pachaiyappa College following a sharp exchange of letters between him and William Miller, Principal of Christian College. John Adam, Principal of Pachaiyappa College, pressed for Pandiah's resignation on the grounds that he had shown "a want of inter-collegiate etiquette and courtesy." Pandiah's resignation in July 1888, according to one account, caused "quite a sensation in the Hindu quarters" of Madras.⁴⁹

These setbacks, far from daunting Pandiah, spurred him on to even more determined efforts to realize what he claimed was "the dream of my life."⁵⁰ In a series of discourses, he explained, at length, the necessity of establishing a theological college and called for generous Hindu contributions. His strongest financial backers were some Hindu merchants in Madras, principally, M. Balakrishniah Pantalu and T. Gopinath Tawker, Treasurer and Secretary, respectively, of the Hindu Theological College Fund. Ramakrishniah Pantalu, a Theosophist, was a wealthy merchant in Sowcarpet, while Gopinath Tawker belonged to a long-established diamond firm in Mint Street, which had made a large fortune through sales of gems and stones to the ruling aristocracy and wealthy Indians and Europeans.⁵¹ Although Pandiah had estimated that about Rs 500,000 would be required to launch a college, subscriptions had been considerably less. By September 1888, Rs 31,000 had been raised,⁵² and it was decided that this amount was adequate to start a high school. In January 1889 the Hindu Theosophical High School was formally

opened with a student enrollment of 300 and with Pandiah as headmaster.⁵³ At the end of the year, a spacious building was purchased in the hope of giving "stability and permanence" to the institution.⁵⁴ Financial support continued to come, sometimes even in large amounts. In 1891, for example, the Raja of Ramnad donated Rs 15,000 following his visit to the institution, and Pandiah even cherished hopes that with more such donations a theological university might be eventually established which could give diplomas to students specializing in Hindu theology.⁵⁵

The Hindu Theological High School was only one expression of the growing influence of Hindu Revivalism in South India. As this movement gained in strength, relations with the Christian missionaries progressively worsened. Any onslaught by the latter on Hinduism, either through student conversions or street preachings at Hindu festivals, provoked an angry response from the Hindu revivalists. One missionary complained in September 1889 that Hindus did not appreciate "the spirit of true toleration." He wrote:

Hinduism is tolerant in name but not in reality. Every week brings fresh evidence of its intolerant spirit. Every conversion arouses latent intolerance, which manifests itself in indignation meetings and bitter reproaches upon the padres and all who have been connected with the conversion.⁵⁶

Another missionary, Rev. J. C. Peattie of the Free Church Mission, expressed his deep concern over "the new style warfare" which the Hindu revivalist societies had introduced in South India. In an appeal to the Western-educated class, he accused these societies of "rousing prejudice and ill-feeling in their worst forms, and of inducing youth to practise all manner of rudeness and bravado." He welcomed Hindu cooperation, particularly to arrest the deterioration in student

behavior in Madras.⁵⁷

If European missionaries had misgivings about Hindu Revivalism, Hindu social reformers in Madras seemed to have regarded it as an ally of their cause. Some social reformers, notably, of the traditional school, believed that revivalists would help their cause by propagating the true doctrines of Hinduism. Raghunatha Rao, for example, saw in Hindu Revivalism a means to restore the "golden age" of India when the conduct of the Hindus would again be determined by the Shastras.⁵⁸ A member of the Theosophical Society, he had established the Association for the Propagation of True Religion in 1886 to encourage the study of the Shastras.⁵⁹ The *Hindu*, whose editor and managing proprietor were active in social reform organizations, saw the revivalist movement as "the result of a generous spirit of improvement, a general renaissance, that is rapidly permeating the whole Hindu nation." The paper denied that there was intolerance or unreasonableness in this movement, and was confident that it would herald beneficial changes within Hindu society.⁶⁰ How far the social reformers entertained ideas of support for their cause from the forces of Hindu Revivalism is not clear, but their patronage of the latter movement yielded small dividends, indeed, when the Age of Consent Bill controversy flared up in 1890.

THE AGE OF CONSENT BILL CONTROVERSY

The appeal for state help to effect social reform, the ultimate weapon in the armory of Indian reformers, was made in earnest in August 1884 when Malabari's "Notes" on "Infant Marriage in India" and "Enforced Widowhood" were published. Malabari portrayed in graphic terms the evils arising from these essentially high caste Hindu practices. Much of what he said about the nature and consequences of these social evils was well known in India, at least in reformist circles, but the remedies that

he suggested had an aspect of novelty, if not of severity. Although he was not seeking "a legal ban" against infant marriage, a practice which he felt contributed largely to the problem of widowhood, Malabari wanted the government to show its disapproval of the practice by barring married students from colleges after a five-year period of grace and giving preference to unmarried applicants in the public service.⁶¹ He also urged a similar "interposition of authority [of the State] to a small extent" to break down the restrictions that caste had imposed on widow remarriage. Priests were to be deprived of the power of excommunicating widows seeking remarriage, while protection was to be extended to widows wishing to liberate themselves from enforced seclusion or other disabilities that Hindu customs inflicted on them.⁶²

Reformers in South India, while readily admitting the evils which Malabari complained of, had reservations about the wisdom of invoking state intervention to solve social ills.

Raghunatha Rao asserted that in principle "anything connected with Hindu religion should not be interfered with by the Government." Social reforms, he felt, should "come from within and not from without."⁶³ S. Subramania Iyer, while echoing these sentiments, warned that legislation would more "retard than promote progress," a danger which weighed heavily with many reformers. Chentsal Rao, for example, argued that social legislation would lead to "no beneficial results" and, indeed, might "shake the confidence of the people in the neutrality of Government in religious matters and create a reaction in favour of the very evils which it is our wish to repress."⁶⁴ Reactions from reformers elsewhere in the country were equally adverse to state intervention, and the Indian Government had little option but to reject Malabari's plea, though expressing a willingness to consider legislation against proven social evils if such legislation had been "asked by a section, important in influence or number, of the Hindu

community itself."⁶⁵

Although Malabari's proposals failed to gain general support, they were nevertheless useful in eliciting replies from a wide range of reformist and official sympathizers. Some of these replies were an exercise in finding more realistic and feasible remedies to the evils afflicting Hindu society. As expected, much attention was paid to the question of state intervention, and an attempt was made to define those areas within which the state could legitimately and with safety intervene. In the main, reformist thinkers were divided between those who wanted to ban infant marriage and those who favored the raising of the age of consent. In the former camp were Raghunatha Rao and Madava Rao, while in the latter camp was K. T. Telang, a Bombay lawyer, who believed that reform was "most urgently called for in regard to the time of consummation, and not so much in regard to the time of marriage." Presumably anticipating opposition to "external" interference, Telang argued that delaying consummation would be "a reform from within."⁶⁶ It was Maxwell Melvill, Judicial Member of the Bombay Government, who in effect suggested that the age of consent could be safely raised to twelve. Replying to Malabari in May 1886, he claimed that infant marriage was "not necessarily a bad institution, or at all events not so bad as to render legislative interference desirable."⁶⁷ He drafted a scheme to amend section 375 of the Indian Penal Code, raising the age of consent from ten to twelve.

The formal discussion of this issue did not take place until the third National Social Conference assembled in Bombay in December 1889. Opposition to this idea was expected, as a circular had been distributed from Poona which urged reformers to disavow state intervention and achieve their aims through voluntary methods.⁶⁸ At the Conference there was "an animated debate" verging on "apparent disorder" before the resolution welcoming the raising of the age of consent was passed.⁶⁷

Passing resolutions on reformist platforms, however, was hardly considered adequate to convince those sections of public opinion in the country which had doubts about invoking legislative intervention by the state to remedy a social evil. In South India reformist leaders decided to explain through the columns of the press and on the platform the need for such legislation and, thereby, to dispel any untoward fears that such action might give rise to in certain quarters.

Two leaders who took an active part in this campaign were Raghunatha Rao and G. Subramania Iyer. Raghunatha Rao had played a part in ensuring that the recent National Social Conference accepted the raising of the age of consent, and on his return to Madras he explained to his local friends why he had changed his mind on the question of state intervention. In a letter to the *Madras Times*, Raghunatha Rao explained that for some years he had been urging the government to appoint a commission to inquire and report on the Hindu laws of marriage, and, thereby, help in the promulgation of a code of Hindu law founded on the Shastras.⁷⁰ His wish had not been granted and, therefore, he was prepared to support piecemeal legislation, such as the Age of Consent Bill, provided that it conformed to the Shastras.⁷¹ Raghunatha Rao also published a pamphlet to demonstrate that the Vedas, the "highest authority" of the Hindus, weighed on the side of those urging that the age of consent be raised.⁷²

If Raghunatha Rao resorted to the authority of Hindu scriptures to fortify his cause, G. Subramania Iyer appealed with equal conviction to Western rationalist writers, like Spinoza and T. H. Green, to justify state intervention on social issues. As early as June 1889, Subramania Iyer had made a strong plea for reforms in all directions, rather than concentrating on the political front alone. In a speech to the Madura Union, he asserted that there were "radical defects in all our institutions, social, domestic and political. It is not enough that we labour politically alone.

Our advancement in politics must commensurate with our advancement in other directions." He expressed regret that "the whole educated activity" of the country was channelled more towards "political progress than in the line of social or domestic progress." To rectify this imbalance, he wanted the cause of social reform to be served by "an organization as large as and as influential as the Congress," which he believed would generate greater discussion on such issues as overseas travel, female education, and inter-caste marriage, and, thereby, influence public opinion.⁷³

G. Subramania Iyer's speech was frankly a challenge to the prevailing assumption among his colleagues in the professional elite that political reform must have priority over social reform. Ever since K. T. Telang delivered his widely publicized speech on this issue in 1886, this view had almost attained sanctity among Congress politicians. Subramania Iyer obviously wanted to review the position, and he returned to the theme in a speech he gave in Madras in January 1890. He argued that, if the political aspirations of the Congress were to be ultimately realized, then "social reform must advance along with political reform, if, indeed, it is not to precede the latter." Political enfranchisement, he argued, depended upon "the fitness of the people to exercise that power," and would only be conceded after "a long process of discipline and training" when the nation became "more sincere, more disinterested, more courageous," and had raised itself to the "intelligence and moral power" of the European countries. The existing "social customs and institutions" of India, he believed, were "entirely opposed to the development of these great qualities," and he urged reformers to remove these social and religious obstacles which impeded the country's regeneration.

In seeking to define the role of the state in modifying social institutions and usages, G. Subramania Iyer drew freely from the writings of T. H. Green. He viewed the state as "a moral and

spiritual organism" whose obligations to society were not exhausted by merely providing for the maintenance of law and order:

The sole end of the State is not merely protection of property, is not merely happiness of people, is not justice (the realisation of law); the State lives for something higher than merely keeping man from mischief. Law and justice are a condition of politics more than their end. The true definition of the proper and direct end of the State is the development of national capacities, the perfecting of national life, and finally, its completion.

Subramania Iyer was far from advocating any *carte blanche* interference by the state in social issues. Interference, he emphasized, must be "timely and cautious," within the bounds of "some precautions," and should never be directed against "the liberty of the individual and the liberty of convenience." Ideally, he would have preferred reforms through the progress of education and by "voluntary agencies," but in the existing Hindu society neither of these methods was effective enough to combat "the tyranny of caste and orthodoxy." Education, he complained, operated with "extreme slowness. You cannot convert an ignorant into an educated nation in a year or two." The voluntary agencies, "excellent as far as they go," could "only go a little way and exert very little influence on the enormous mass of ignorance that blocks the way of reform." Nor was Subramania Iyer convinced that state interference must be opposed when the ruling authority was "alien." Such an argument, he said, had force in a society which was "vigorous and self-working," but not in a society which was like "a sick man requiring external stimulus to keep him up."⁷⁴

As the editor of the *Hindu*, G. Subramania Iyer wielded a powerful weapon which he could use to

bolster his cause. This was precisely what he did during the long months when the Age of Consent Bill controversy convulsed the country. The *Hindu's* editorial and correspondence columns became the main forum for the frank, and sometimes bitter, debate about the merits and demerits of the proposed legislation. To a large extent, the editorial columns reflected the thinking of Subramania Iyer who produced a stream of editorials justifying legislative intervention, dispelling the fears of those who had reservations about the motives of the British rulers, and exhorting the Western-educated class to throw in its support behind the legislation. The *Swadesamitran*, published in the same premises as the *Hindu*, conducted a similar campaign to mobilize support among its Tamil readers.

The extent of the *Hindu's* involvement in the Age of Consent Bill controversy invited strong criticism from various quarters in Madras. Some believed that the paper, as the representative organ of Indian opinion in South India, should not assume such a partisan attitude on an issue in which its readers held widely divergent views. Others alleged that the editor was "unduly aggressive" in his advocacy of the proposed legislation and was guilty of using "violent language" against those who opposed the measure. One correspondent claimed that the editor, by making "all sorts of extravagant and extreme demands and impossible expectations," was retarding rather than promoting India's progress.⁷⁵ Another critic of the *Hindu* alleged in March 1890, with some justification, that the paper had recently given "a radical twist" to its discussions on social reform. It was claimed that "moral and religious radicalism" was subversive to Hindu social order and pregnant with dangerous consequences to the country.⁷⁶ A rumor also gained wide currency in October 1890 that "such native papers as are advocating Legislative interference with Hindu marriage and other customs, are experiencing a large falling off in their circulation." The editor of the *Hindu* dismissed this

rumor as without foundation.⁷⁷

The fact that the *Hindu* became a center of fierce controversy during the Age of Consent Bill debate could be largely traced to the widely held belief in Madras that there had been a radical change in its editorial policy ever since the editor decided to remarry his widowed daughter. In 1889 G. Subramania Iyer's daughter of twelve was widowed before consummation, and this placed him in the dilemma of either consigning his daughter to a harsh life of enforced widowhood, or of courting orthodox anger and ostracism by remarrying her. It was a very difficult and painful decision, and, after some months of soul-searching, he decided on the latter course, for, as he told W. S. Caine, M.P., he "could not face the life-long misery of a daughter whom he loved as his own soul, and preferred the risk of ex-communication." The wedding was celebrated at Bombay in December 1889 on the occasion of the fifth Congress gathering there. According to the *Madras Times*, though there was "no organised opposition, there had been visible signs of silent disapprobation on the part of the orthodox, of culpable indifference" on the part of educated bigotry.⁷⁸ Many of Subramania Iyer's friends and relatives soon deserted him, while according to Caine "no priest will minister his family, no servant will enter his household, no Hindoo who is not a Congress-wallah will openly associate with him or marry into his family." Subramania Iyer found the experience almost unnerving, while his wife was overcome by the stress of ostracism and died in April 1890.⁷⁹

One person who was acutely embarrassed by the *Hindu*'s being dragged into a controversy with its readers was Viraraghava Chari, the managing proprietor of the paper, who had played no less an important role than G. Subramania Iyer in making it the leading Indian paper in South India. He shared some of Subramania Iyer's enthusiasm for social reform, and supported the Age of Consent Bill in principle, but he believed that the *Hindu* should

adopt a less partisan stand and show greater respect for the feelings of those who had strong reservations about legislative action to solve social problems. In an effort to achieve this, and to scale down what he felt was the undue emphasis that the *Hindu* had recently given to social issues, Viraraghava Chari suggested the idea of "a separate weekly paper solely devoted to social and moral reforms."⁸⁰ The proposal led to the founding of the *Indian Social Reformer* in September 1890, but this did not remove the *Hindu* or its editor from the center of a controversy which was then reaching a critical stage.

It was evident at this juncture that opinion in South India was becoming polarized. The majority of the vernacular newspapers were opposed to legislative interference in the social usages of their country.

Also, some prominent leaders were beginning to express their dissent, though without clearly articulating their reasons. One of them was Madava Rao, who had resigned from the Congress in April 1890 following a bitter dispute over the introduction of an elective element in the Indian legislatures. How far this event affected his attitude on social issues is not clear, but he seems to have showed little of the enthusiasm that he had in the past displayed for social reform. He attacked the editor of the *Hindu* for not representing the views of "the millions who constitute the great bulk of the Hindu community,"⁸¹ and some months later hailed it as "a matter of great congratulation," when rumors were current that newspapers advocating social legislation were experiencing a fall in circulation.⁸²

Other Hindu leaders, often known for their liberal views on social questions, refrained from any public expression of their views on the question of the Age of Consent Bill, and this, not unnaturally, raised suspicions that these leaders did not have the courage of their convictions and were not prepared to be dragged into a controversy in

which they might incur unpopularity.

It was this attitude which exasperated reformers like G. Subramania Iyer. In a speech at the Triplicane Literary Society in September 1890, Subramania Iyer accused the intelligent men of "running away from the responsibility that the present position had created; there was a spirit of evasion, a spirit of explaining away, excusing oneself, a running away as it were from the responsibility of the post." He said that this attitude had caused great pain to him and others who supported legislative action as the most effective way to cure social evils. Talk of "mass rebellion," Subramania Iyer said, was "simple nonsense" and he urged that pressure be maintained on the government to effect the proposed change.⁸³

Anxious to "show to the world the strength of the reform party," the supporters of the Age of Consent Bill in Madras convened a meeting in October 1890 to discuss the issue. An appeal was made to the "Dravidian social reformers and their leaders" to attend the meeting, as it was argued that the issue had become one of "great national importance."⁸⁴ Raghunatha Rao was the main speaker for the proposed legislation, and he tried to dispel fears that this measure would interfere with the law or performance of Hindu marriage, or that it threatened the integrity of Hinduism in any way. Some sections of the audience did not agree. T. P. Kothandarama Iyer, a lawyer in the Madras High Court, questioned the necessity for such legislation. He also alleged that the proposed measure would place "undue power in the hands of the police, who might abuse it to the detriment of people at large." Another lawyer, Sundram Sastri, agreed contending that there was no necessity for legislation as the evil complained of did not exist in South India. However, despite spirited opposition, the meeting endorsed a petition to the Indian Government welcoming legislation to raise the age of consent to twelve.⁸⁵

Opponents of the measure did not take long to

plan a counter-demonstration. A preliminary meeting, held in November 1890 at the home of Madava Rao, finalized measures to hold a public meeting of those opposing state intervention in social issues. Attended by some of the "distinguished pleaders, officials and educationists," including Somasundram Chetty, Sundram Sastri, and Kothandarama Iyer, the meeting agreed that it was "not desirable that the Legislature should raise the Age of Consent." A small committee was constituted to convene a "meeting of sympathisers," at which a protest memorial was to be adopted for submission to the Indian Government.⁸⁶ The *Madras Times* described this meeting as "the spectacle of a few 'old men' in the city" swimming against the general current of reform and progress in the country.⁸⁷ Raghunatha Rao remarked that the participants in the meeting "should be either ignorant of their religion, or be pandering to the prejudices of their co-religionists."⁸⁸ This comment brought an immediate retort from Madava Rao, who announced his resignation from the National Social Conference, a gesture reminiscent of his resignation from the Madras Standing Congress Committee in April 1890 after the controversy over the Cross Bill.⁸⁹

The meeting against the Age of Consent Bill took place in early December and was attended by leaders of both factions. With feelings running high, and with both sides having marshalled their supporters to full strength, there were all the signs of a major clash. After a brief speech from the chairman, Somasundram Chetty, Madava Rao rose to move the first resolution, which claimed that the measure was "unnecessary so far as this Presidency, at all events, is concerned." He described the Bill as "a gigantic deception" and "the most preposterous ever heard in old Asia." As the British were "a just, wise and considerate Government," Madava Rao felt constrained to warn them "against the covert designs of a batch of so-called Social Reformers even microscopically inappreciable." "An imperial race," he continued, "should not trust

such shallow reformers backed by a few, stray, vindictive outcastes." When he turned his anger on Raghunatha Rao and Malabari, interruptions started from the audience, and Raghunatha Rao rose to demand the right of reply.⁹⁰ Madava Rao refused to yield, contending that it was a meeting of those opposed to the Age of Consent Bill. With the chairman virtually helpless and other speakers trying to mount the platform, the meeting degenerated into "one of uncontrollable disorder and rowdyism" and was adjourned without passing a single resolution.⁹¹

Each group blamed the other for the unhappy spectacle. The organizers of the meeting laid the blame on the reformers, claiming that they should not have attended a meeting convened to protest against the Age of Consent Bill. The reformers, in reply, asserted that the circular announcing the meeting invited "the General Public of Madras," and, as such, their views deserved to be heard as much as those of their opponents. Neutral observers, however, were agreed that the real cause of the uproar was Madava Rao's frontal attack on the reformers. However, as one discerning observer remarked, this meeting did not enhance anyone's reputation:⁹²

Consequently, beyond giving an opportunity to some zealots of the Hindu Tract Society to cry at the top of their voices that the Church was in danger and utter disrespectful remarks against worthy men . . . beyond furnishing an opportunity for Rajah Sir T. Madhava Row to dig a grave for the interment of his reputation, and beyond supplying an enjoyable half-hour of popular excitement to youngsters, the meeting did no good to anybody.

However, the events of the first meeting did not deter its organizers from holding a second meeting soon afterwards to record their protest against the Age of Consent Bill. While recognizing "the evils of early consummation," the meeting resolved that such instances were too rare in South India to

warrant preventive legislation.⁹³ Also, at this time, Muslims in Madras held a meeting to protest against the measure.

Amid the strong emotions which this issue had aroused in Madras, only the Triplicane Literary Society seemed to have discussed it with any degree of restraint and to have suggested creative improvements in the proposed law. In a petition to the Indian Government submitted in November 1890, the Society welcomed the reasons for the measure and urged that the age of consent be raised to fourteen. However, it opposed the scale of punishment prescribed, which was transportation, contending that such severity might "defeat the very end in view." It also urged that the courts should not take notice of such offences except where death or grievous hurt resulted. In this way, the Society believed that the dangers of "vexatious arrest and investigations into delicate family matters" by the police could be reduced.⁹⁴

The breach caused by the Age of Consent Bill among the metropolitan leaders was also evident in the *mofussil*. In the majority of the *mofussil* centers where the issue was discussed at public meetings, notably, Salem, Palghat, Coimbatore, Masulipatam, Tanjore, Mayaveram, and Chingleput, resolutions were passed opposing the Bill. Support for the Bill only came from Cocanada, where Norton's speech appeared to have persuaded the audience to accept the measure, provided that amendments were made along the lines suggested by the Triplicane Literary Society.⁹⁵

The Indian press in the Presidency was also divided on this issue. In the metropolis, the principal supporters of the Age of Consent Bill were the trinity of Mount Road publications: the *Hindu*, *Swadesamitran*, and *Andhra Prakasika*. In the *mofussil*, the measure was welcomed by *Kerala Patrika* and *Kerala Sanchari*, two well-known Malayalam weeklies of Calicut. The majority of the other newspapers opposed the Bill, including almost every Urdu paper in the Presidency.

It was at the height of this agitation that the Congress and National Social Conference assembled at Calcutta in December 1890. The *Hindu*, though in the past opposed to the discussion of social issues in the Congress agenda, advocated the inclusion of the Age of Consent Bill on the grounds that it was a national issue affecting all classes and creeds in the country.⁹⁶ W. S. Caine, a British M.P. with influence in Congress circles, "almost passionately appealed to his native friends in Madras" to raise the issue in the Congress as he feared that attempts to ignore it would seriously discredit the organization "in the eyes of all Englishmen" and endanger their demands for political concessions.⁹⁷ The Madras deputation was converted but the Subjects Committee, which was responsible for drafting resolutions before they were debated at the open Congress sessions, refused to depart from its past policy of neutrality on social issues.⁹⁸

If the reticence of the Congress was understandable, the attitude of the Social Conference perplexed many reformers in the country. Despite pressure from delegates from Madras, the Conference decided to omit any reference to the Age of Consent Bill for fear of precipitating an open rupture. The editor of the *Hindu*, aghast at this silence "on the burning question of the hour," asserted that the Conference should have recorded its verdict on the issue irrespective of the consequences.⁹⁹

In January 1891 the Bill came up for discussion in the Supreme Legislative Council. Voicing the sentiments of those opposed to the measure was Romesh Chandra Mitter, who warned Council members that the Bill was "likely to cause widespread discontent in the country." The editor of the *Hindu* accused Mitter of becoming "the mouthpiece of the uneducated masses" and criticized the speech as "not quite worthy of him."¹⁰⁰ This sparked off a fresh outburst of protests against the editor of the *Hindu*. P. S. Sivasamy Iyer, a lawyer and a Congress stalwart, protested against the editor's

having "used so strong a language and indulged in an attack on one of our most distinguished countrymen." V. Krishnaswamy Iyer, a leading member of the Madras Standing Congress Committee, remonstrated strongly against the "objectionable" way in which the *Hindu* dealt with those who disagreed with its views. He reserved his support for the Bill so long as its "obnoxious provisions" remained and the "necessary safeguards" were not incorporated into it.¹⁰¹

With the Congress leaders being drawn into angry exchanges over this issue, Hume felt that he ought to intervene to prevent any possible damage to his organization. In a published statement in January 1891, Hume denied that the Congress was opposed to the measure. Except for Bengal, he claimed that "a major portion of his native friends" supported the Age of Consent Bill.¹⁰² However, in a private letter to the viceroy, Hume urged for certain amendments to the Bill to "throw oil upon the troubled waters" and "sweep away the great mass of those angry and embittered feelings" that the measure had roused in the country. As "a golden bridge for all parties," he advocated Mitter's suggestion that puberty rather than an age limit be prescribed as the age of consent, but, subsequently, withdrew this proposal claiming that his "party" would not accept it.¹⁰³ Lansdowne refused to compromise and the Supreme Legislative Council passed an unamended Age of Consent Bill in March 1891.

THE AFTERMATH

Although it is hazardous to try and gauge the strength and direction of popular opinion on issues of this kind, contemporary observers were in little doubt that public opinion in South India was largely opposed to this legislation. The *Christian College Magazine* remarked at the height of the controversy that many prominent Indians had openly expressed their misgivings about the Age of Consent Bill,

while many more "who do not care to make their opinions public, entertain the feeling that legislation is inadvisable."¹⁰⁴ This impression is confirmed by the reading of the contemporary press, especially the vernacular press, and the speeches made at meetings to discuss the issue in the various parts of the Presidency.

Although many of the ardent supporters of the measure conceded that popular opinion was against them, what they found intolerable were some of the tactics which their opponents had adopted to frustrate the proposed legislation. In February 1891 the editor of the *Hindu* urged the Indian Government to pass the Bill quickly to put an end to the "nauseating discussion" of its opponents. He agreed with the editor of the *Indian Mirror* that early legislation would close "the columns of newspapers from spreading moral leprosy in the land." He also accused the Western-educated class of "successfully playing on the credulity of the masses" and ignoring the fact that agitation should be strictly constitutional.¹⁰⁵

This controversy was significant in dispelling one popularly held myth, namely, that the Western-educated class were allies in the cause of social reform. The *Hindu* asserted that this class, far from taking an enlightened view of the issue and guiding public opinion, had only shown its "stolid conservatism and mischievous spirit of false patriotism."¹⁰⁶ Many prominent figures in the Presidency, notably, Madava Rao, Somasundram Chetty, Vijiaraghava Chari, and Saminatha Iyer, had come out in total opposition to the Age of Consent Bill. Another group of leaders, including, S. Subramania Iyer, Chentsal Rao, Muthusamy Iyer, Seshia Sastry, Bhashyam Iyengar, and Krishnaswamy Iyer, had expressed strong reservations about the punitive provisions of the Bill and tended to cast doubts upon the efficacy of solving social problems through legislation. Then again, a number of others, like Ananda Charlu, Rangiah Naidu, and Balaji Rao, had chosen to remain silent rather than declaring their

stand. Such deep cleavages, and the fact that the debate over the Bill was conducted with considerable bitterness, were bound to have far-reaching implications for the Presidency as a whole.

For social reform, the immediate consequence of this controversy was the rupture in the alliance between the traditional and rationalist wing of the movement. This alliance had existed since the early 1880s, with the leadership vested in the hands of the traditional wing. However, during the Age of Consent Bill debate, the rationalist wing came to play the more active role, led by such leaders as G. Subramania Iyer, K. Subba Rao, sub-editor of the *Hindu*, K. Natarajan, managing proprietor of the *Indian Social Reformer*, and A. Subba Rao, lecturer in the Madras Presidency College. It was these activists who started the *Indian Social Reformer* in September 1890 in order to generate support for the proposed legislation. They also became critical of the methods pursued by the traditional wing, questioning in particular the latter's reliance on the Shastras as the guideline for reform. The editor of the *Hindu*, for example, asserted in March 1891 that what was important was "moderate but steady reform" guided by "the suggestions of science and reason" and "without looking to Shastras or any writings of ancient personages for authority or sanction."¹⁰⁷ In February 1892 discussions began among members of the Hindu Marriage Association of Madras to define afresh "the fundamental principles of the Association," but no common ground was found whereby the two wings of the body could continue their former partnership.¹⁰⁸

The inevitable rupture came when Raghunatha Rao refused to partake in a symbolic dinner given on the occasion of a widow remarriage in August 1892. The rationalist wing rebuked him for not discharging his duty as the president of the Hindu Marriage Association. Raghunatha Rao, stung by growing criticisms of his leadership, challenged those reformers opposed to the Shastras to form their own organization.¹⁰⁹ The challenge was

accepted, and in November 1892 the rationalist wing launched the Madras Hindu Social Reform Association.

The emergence of this Association symbolized a more radical break with Hindu tradition on the part of the reformers. Its declared objectives were the promotion of female education, reform of domestic and marriage habits, and the "Amalgamation of Castes." Social usages, like infant marriage, nautch-going, and untouchability, were fearlessly denounced. Nor did these reformers inhibit themselves in the choice of methods to achieve their goals. Members of the Association were required under its constitution to educate women in their household, defer marriage of daughters until after the age of ten, partake in inter-caste dining and attend parties for remarried couples. Both the press and the platform were to be used to popularize reform, while state intervention was to be sought to remove proven social ills.¹¹⁰ Unlike earlier bodies, the Madras Hindu Social Reform Association demanded more than a mere "verbal and intellectual assent" to its program, and, indeed, began to draw a distinction between the so-called "thinking reformer" and the "courage-of-conviction reformer." The former was often the object of ridicule, accused of wanting "moral courage, self-confidence" and leading "a double life."¹¹¹

Opposition to the Madras Hindu Social Reform Association came from both the traditional reformers and Hindu revivalists. S. Subramania Iyer, who belonged to the former group, claimed in 1894 that the activities of the Association were "retarding rather than advancing the progress of our cause." He urged the "ardent reformers" to avoid "narrow dogmatism" and to seek social changes "gradually, cautiously and in a reasonable and truly patriotic spirit." In a pointed reference to the methods pursued by the radical reformers, Subramania Iyer cautioned that "no one has a right to demand from another that amount of self-sacrifice, which is consistent with his thoughts and ideas."¹¹² M. Ranga Chari, a professor at

Trevandram College, was even more critical of the methods of the radical group. He charged the editors of the *Indian Social Reformer* with displaying "a kind of radical restlessness and destructive ire" in their writings and even "the faint touch of innocent malice."¹¹³ A similar charge was also made by Raghunatha Rao. He contended that the term reform had become a cover for "almost all irreligious and vicious acts."¹¹⁴ The breach between the traditional and rationalist wing remained unhealed throughout the 1890s. In 1894, when the National Social Conference was held in Madras, Ranade urged both sides "to make up the quarrel."¹¹⁵ Though they did cooperate during the Conference, the split remained.

However, the mantle of opposing the radical reformers was increasingly assumed by revivalist groups. The latter's counterblast against the reformers was directed at the "denationalising" tendency of the reformist program and the "revolutionary" methods that were employed to achieve social change. The reformers were "atheistical, irreverent and materialistic," and "too fond of western dress and manners and despise too much their own nationality."¹¹⁶ In some revivalist circles, it was even claimed that the reformist censure of the Hindu social system and religious traditions was "unpatriotic" and wounding to the "national self-respect" of the Hindus.

The Hindu revivalists found a ready ally in the Theosophical Society. Since 1893, when Annie Besant arrived in Madras to join Olcott, the Theosophical movement had found a fresh impetus and had begun to recapture some of the popularity that it had enjoyed in South India during the preceding decade. In this revival, Besant played a crucial role. Possessing considerable personal charm, she stirred her Indian audiences by the eloquence of her lectures and by her knowledge of Hindu philosophy, religion, and science. Like Olcott before her, Besant considered materialism the greatest threat to India, and she regarded her Indian

sojourn as a mission to redeem Hindus, especially the younger generation, from the pitfalls of materialism. She urged her Hindu friends to follow "the Indian simplicity of material life instead of the costly and more luxurious Western habits" and to preserve their "various national costumes," their close family ties, and the four-fold caste system. At the same time, she proclaimed the superiority of Hinduism over other world religions, contending that it was "the source of all great religions and philosophies." In an interview for an English newspaper, the *Daily Chronicle*, Besant was quoted as saying: "I regard Hindooism as the most ancient of all religions, and as containing more fully than any other the spiritual truths named Theosophy in modern times. Theosophy is the ancient Brahma Vidya of India."¹¹⁷

Such sentiments, expressed in her numerous lectures in various parts of the country, warmed the hearts of Hindu revivalists, for, as one of them remarked, the Theosophist leaders had "brought back to us Hindus the vital spark of self-respect which we were about to lose."¹¹⁸ Her critics, however, complained that she was seeking popularity by "her outrageous flattery of Indians and of everything connected with India" and by her attacks on Western materialism and what she termed "dogmatic Christianity."¹¹⁹ The Hindu social reformers, for their part, lamented that Besant strengthened the "spiritual pride" of the Hindus "with a bigotry and plausibility of reasoning unknown to the Orthodox."¹²⁰

It would be wrong, however, to regard the reformers and revivalists as forces of innovation and reaction in South India. Indeed, it would be truer to say that these opposing groups were essentially forces of change offering alternative models for achieving social modernization within the Hindu community. If the reformers sought to inspire change along rationalist lines and in the light of Western social experience, the revivalists wanted to find largely Indian prescriptions to regenerate

their society. That the latter were committed to change was attested by their decision to organize the Madras Hindu Association in 1904. In defining their objectives, the leaders of this body pledged to promote "Hindu social and religious advancement on national lines in harmony with the spirit of Hindu Civilisation." The major planks of the reformist platform were incorporated into their program, including female education, encouragement of adult marriages, foreign travel, and the uplift of the depressed classes.¹²¹

The contest between the reformers and revivalists found its echo in the equally stormy argument that was to divide the Congress into contending political camps during the first decade of the twentieth century. In the past, the ideology of the Congress had been largely inspired by Western political experience. Hume and his Indian allies, who were behind its formation, were convinced of their ability to work towards the ideal of parliamentary self-government for India through gradual and orderly stages, and they were fortified in this ideal by the support that they received from the liberal section of public opinion in Britain and by the attainment of self-rule by such British colonies as Canada, Australia, and New Zealand. In formulating their program and in conducting their political work, these Congress leaders imitated British political style. Equally, in stressing secularism, fundamental liberties, and democratic institutions, they also showed their attachment to the values and norms of Western liberalism.

This so-called "Moderate" style of politics came to be questioned during the 1890s not only in terms of its effectiveness in securing India's national regeneration but also in terms of its relevance to the country's societal needs and problems. The stress on fundamental liberties, democratic institutions, and secularism, was challenged on the grounds that these were alien importations, unsuited to the requirements and capacity of the Indian people. Mrs. Besant, in a lecture attended

by several Congress delegates in Madras in December 1894, claimed that India was becoming "a strange compound of conflicting ideas, of an ancient nation ruled politically by a foreign power; and in her there is the double idea--one the old idea, of duty, and the other the idea of democracy transported to Indian soil, not in the certainty that the soil is suited to the exotic plant." Arguing that radical European concepts, such as the "rights of man," were being introduced into India without any awareness of possible consequences for the country, Besant urged that Indian politicians, in formulating their political ideology, ought to provide "a basis of philosophy of conduct, or else the conduct will be erratic and unsatisfactory."¹²²

A more forthright critic of the Congress was K. Sundararaman, a college professor who had attended its inaugural meeting at Bombay in 1885. In an essay, "The National Movement in India," published in 1903, Sundararaman claimed that there were "two alternative courses" open to Indians seeking to regenerate their country:

One is to take up the ideas and aims of European civilisation and try to work them up as best we can into the framework, the marrow, and bone, of our own civilisation; the other is to study our own civilisation and its place in the order of the world in the light of past experience and to base our collective life and new organisation on the results afforded by an intelligent comprehension of the capabilities of the national genius.

He labelled the advocates of these two schools of thought the "party of the West" and the "party of the East." In his view, the former represented the "revolutionary ideal," because it aimed at destroying "the traditional social organisation and the dominant ideals of life in India." Such methods, Sundararaman contended, were not new in India, for he regarded Buddhism, Jainism, and Islam

as earlier attempts to overthrow by revolution India's national life and habits. The advent of British rule, he claimed, had released new revolutionary currents into the country, notably, Christianity, Western rationalism, and "the socialistic dogma of the natural equality of all men in every respect." He admitted that these influences had an appeal among the Western-educated class, some of whom had organized the Congress and were seeking to mold India along Western patterns. While he expressed broad sympathy for the Congress ideal of progressive advance in the country's material and moral condition under British supremacy, Sundararaman was clearly skeptical of its ability ever to build up "a National State" in India in the Western sense. Hence, he criticized those Congress leaders who, misled by their idealism, were seeking to undermine the country's social organization and its ancient spiritual values. He charged that these Congress leaders, despite their annual demonstrations, passing of resolutions and producing of reports, had made neither great sacrifices nor undergone any real sufferings to evoke popular sympathy in India or to win the respect of the British rulers. He reminded the Congress supporters

. . . that speeches and resolutions do not form social forces. It is the power of faith that can touch human hearts, and faith comes only to those who undergo great sacrifices and sufferings in what they conceive to be a great aim of human life and endeavour. The Congress politicians and speakers have assuredly made no great sacrifices or undergone such sufferings as to touch human hearts in India with the power of faith or to communicate that magic power to human hearts elsewhere.

Sundararaman claimed that the Congress, after seventeen years of existence, had little to show in

terms of actual political gains. He felt that all the important concessions which India had gained were "a voluntary gift of the British people," rather than the product of Congress exertions or sacrifice. Moreover, he deplored the Congress tendency to ask for favors from the rulers. "Political privilege," he declared, "cannot fittingly be bestowed as alms, but must be earned and claimed as the legitimate due of civic merit in the subject."¹²³

Disillusionment with the ideology and tactics of the Congress was accompanied by growing complaints about the decline in the vigor of the Party as a political force in South India. In December 1891 the editor of the *Hindu* lamented that the "first enthusiasm for the Congress has apparently cooled down, and we seldom hear now of meetings, pamphlets and so forth to popularise the Congress programme or to enlist the sympathy of the masses to advance the work."¹²⁴ This impression was confirmed by Ananda Charlu, a member of the Madras Standing Congress Committee, who claimed in 1893 that politics in South India had suffered "a relapse into its old traditions of insular apathy," and some were led to believe that "the energy of 1887 was but a spasmodic outburst, which (as is natural) was followed by a re-action, with its attendant evil of immobility and diminished and diminishing warmth."¹²⁵

If this claim of waning enthusiasm for the Congress was true, then it must partly account for the difficulties which the Congress leadership in South India faced in raising adequate funds to meet its commitments. The financial outlay of the Congress had been substantially enhanced since the formation of the British Committee in London in July 1889. Congress leaders in Madras had hoped to share the burden with the district subcommittees in the *mofussil*, but "spasmodic efforts" on the part of the latter in raising funds had interrupted the annual remittance to London, at times causing political embarrassment. In 1891 the Madras

Standing Congress Committee recommended the appointment of professional agents in every district to "popularise the Congress cause as well as to facilitate the collection of funds from each District." While urging the district subcommittees to meet their allotment punctually, the Madras leaders warned that failure to do so would result in the possible expulsion of the offending districts from the movement.¹²⁶ This threat did not seem to have any significant effect, for, throughout the 1890s, complaints were heard about dilatoriness on the part of the Congress leaders in South India in meeting their annual contributions to the British Committee.

Although the prevailing political mood of the professional elite during the 1890s was one of general despondency, which found expression in its impatience over organizational weaknesses and lack of progress in securing desired, political concessions, there were, nevertheless, moments when this elite group was able to make a more realistic appraisal of its achievements after a decade of organized political agitation. Undoubtedly, the emergence of the Congress was the single most important political event of the nineteenth century. In the eyes of the professional elite, the advent of the Congress had led to "a marked awakening throughout the country" and had transformed the Indian people from "a condition of political serfdom to a condition of political energy."¹²⁷ In South India, it was claimed that the Congress had provided an elaborate organization, capable of kindling political activity even in the remote centers of the Presidency. Viraraghava Chari, Joint Secretary of the Madras Standing Congress Committee, asserted in 1890 that had "it not been for the Congress, Madras [Presidency] would have been nowhere. It had been greatly helping the people of Madras. Before that time Madras was called benighted. Now we have, throughout the Presidency, Standing Congress Committees to help the Central Committee at Madras."¹²⁸

Equally important, the coming of the Congress

was believed to have stimulated "the growth of enlightened patriotism" in the country and helped to remove some of the barriers created by caste, language, and creed. In a valedictory address to Hume during his farewell visit to Madras in December 1893, the Madras Standing Congress Committee testified to the new spirit of unity which the Congress had evoked among the various communities: "The Hindu and Mahomedan, the Parsee and the Sikh have been taught to acknowledge the elementary axiom that one common thread of humanity runs through all the composite fabrics of colour, caste, and creed. Organization has effected union. . . ."¹²⁹

Even if some of the minority groups disputed this claim, the professional elite remained unshaken in its belief that the spread of Western education, among other agencies, would eventually persuade the minority groups to accept the credentials of the Congress to speak for India as a whole.

Finally, the professional elite recognized the importance of the Congress as an instrument in extracting concessions from the rulers. The leaders of this elite group had accepted Hume's thesis that the British rulers needed a loyal opposition in India which would not only provide an outlet to the political ferment in the country but would also play the creative role of formulating a rational political program capable of being implemented without fear of causing any major disruption--either to the established administrative patterns or to the existing balance of political forces in the country. Here, the Congress leadership had cause to be moderately satisfied with its early achievements, notably, in getting the age limit of entry into the Covenanted Civil Service raised to twenty-three in 1888 and in obtaining a larger and more democratic Indian representation in the country's legislatures four years later. The latter concession was regarded as most important and was hailed by the Madras Congress leadership as "the first instalment of political freedom" for the Indian people.¹³⁰

Undoubtedly, a genuine pride in its past achievements came to sustain the professional elite in its belief that similar exertions in the future would result in the gradual transfer of administrative and political power to Indian hands and, ultimately, secure self-rule for India. It was this vision of self-governing India, still a distant ideal as the nineteenth century drew to a close, which moved the editor of the *Hindu* to observe on 3 December 1893:

The change that has come over the people during the eight short years since the foundation of the Congress is marvellous, and the new sense of power that strengthens their hearts and the success that has so far crowned their efforts will sustain them in the further exertions to develop into maturity the tender plant of political freedom.

Conclusion

Nationalism is the most powerful of the political emotions to stir the peoples of Asia and Africa during the past century. Like other modern ideological movements, nationalism is European in origin and was borne to the non-Western world primarily on the wave of European imperial expansion. What was remarkable about this new phenomenon was the way in which the subject peoples of the third world fashioned this alien ideology into a formidable weapon to eject the European intruders from their shores. Nationalism, in short, acted as the solvent of Western colonialism in Asia and Africa.

It is important for analytical purposes to make a distinction between nationalism and the traditional resistance movements. Although some writers portray the latter as a form of nationalist activity,¹ the burgeoning literature on the subject points to the fact that these two movements were really dichotomous. Except for their shared desire to end alien rule, they had little in common. These two phenomena had a different vision of the kind of state they wished to establish; they drew their leaders from different social milieus; and they employed different ideological and organizational weapons.

Studies on colonial nationalisms in the third world have revealed that they were fostered by an almost identical set of circumstances. These

circumstances have been largely traced to the Western impact. Among other things, European intrusion into Asia and Africa created the framework of modern states, initially, by carving up much of these two continents into separate territorial entities with fixed and defensible frontiers, and, then, by imposing upon these entities common economic, educational, and communication systems.

Peoples who lived within such defined colonial territories found themselves subjected to the same laws and methods of administration. They came to share common grievances and aspirations. A sense of common destiny became manifest, which then expressed itself in movements towards unity and the search after the political kingdom. Nationalism is a shorthand to describe this interplay of sentiment and action.

One striking characteristic of nationalism in the third world was that it was almost always conceived by an elite raised in the Western intellectual tradition. In India, the connection between Western education and the rise of nationalism has long been noted by scholars. The fact that the British rulers introduced a fairly uniform system of higher education in the country, with English as the medium of instruction, led many historians to perceive in the products of this training a new homogeneous class capable of forging countrywide links in order to promote common goals. McCully, writing in 1940, asserts that "higher education provided an element of unity, a synthetic force which transcended linguistic and regional differences and drew its beneficiaries together into a fairly homogeneous grouping on the basis of a common culture." He goes on to argue that this Western-educated class, despite "the shortcomings of its hybrid culture," was imbued with European political doctrines, including nationalism, and was capable of propagating these doctrines through novel forms of organization borrowed from the West. The founding of the Congress is seen as the handiwork of this class.²

Recent scholars of Indian nationalism have introduced certain refinements to the above analysis. Anil Seal, in his study of the emergence of Indian nationalism, claims that the movement "was not formed through the promptings of any class demand or as the consequence of any sharp changes in the structure of the economy." While ascribing nationalism to Western education, Seal argues that education's uneven spread in the country affected political mobilization more conspicuously than any other factor. According to Seal, Western education only made headway in the three coastal presidencies and, even there, only among certain groups who resorted to it in order to conserve or improve their group status. In his calculations of the political arithmetic of India during the 1870s and 1880s, Seal discovers that those who had taken advantage of the new learning were the *bhadralok* of Bengal, the Mahratta Brahmins and Parsis of Bombay Presidency, and the Tamil and Telugu Brahmins of Madras Presidency. Outside of these groups and presidencies, Western education had made little advance. Given this uneven spread of education, and given the intense preexisting rivalries between groups within each region, he reasons that "there was little possibility of unity between the graduates and their societies." In the Madras Presidency, for example, Seal claims that rivalries between Brahmins, who had "as yet no serious competitors in the advance towards western education," and the rest of society were so sharp that there was neither solidarity nor sympathy between them. If collaboration between graduates and their societies was impossible, Seal nonetheless discerns one level--"and this was the level of all-India"--at which the educated elites of Bengal, Bombay, and Madras could work together. "In so doing," he suggests, "their main purpose may well have been to strengthen their position inside their local societies." To put it differently, the Western-educated, as they moved into modern, secular politics, "remained riddled with allegiances to caste

or community, and what from a distance appear as their political strivings were often, on closer examination, their efforts to conserve or improve the position of their prescriptive group." In other words, nationalism was a device of the castes educated in the Western mode to service their own interests. Self-gain was rationalized with reference to the nation.³

Two qualifications can be made in relation to Seal's generalizations on the origins of Indian nationalism. First, it is important to recognize that the circumstances conducive to political mobilization are not found exclusively in the realm of education. Just as important are the economic transformations brought about by the Western impact. In this study, it was seen that the growth of a market society consequent to the establishment of the British Raj had created opportunities for a Hindu commercial elite to rise to prominence in Madras. Acquisitive, enterprising, and endowed with entrepreneurial skills, this elite took advantage of the openings provided by expanding international and domestic trade to amass wealth and acquire status and influence. It was this elite which first experimented with the Western forms of protest and organization in South India, initially, by galvanizing the Hindu population in the southern metropolis to resist Christian missionary pressures to overthrow the official policy of religious neutrality and, subsequently, by founding the Madras Native Association to enlist the support of sympathetic groups in Britain on behalf of political and economic reforms in the Presidency.

The other qualification which ought to be made to Seal's generalizations relates to the need to make some kind of a distinction between the educated who became administrators under the Raj and those who joined the independent professions. In South India, the first generation of the Western-educated who had studied at the Madras High School had become mainly administrators and achieved mobility and prestige in the service of the colonial

regime. Their exemplary habits of industry, integrity, and loyalty won them recognition and rewards from their European superiors. Not surprisingly, this administrative elite favored close and enduring partnership between India and England, even if this partnership was of an unequal kind. Hence, when the younger and more numerous elements in the independent professions emerged during the 1880s to vigorously espouse the cause of nationalism, the administrative elite voiced its misgivings about the aims and methods of such a movement. In its eyes, nationalism sought to drive a wedge between the rulers and the ruled, thereby endangering the stability and ordered progress which India was making under British tutelage. To some extent, its reservations about nationalism were rooted in its generational conflict with the professional elite.

The three elites that have been delineated in this study are examples of the transformations that have attended the intrusion of the West in South India. It is extremely doubtful if Indian nationalism would have emerged in the form that it did without these Western-inspired transformations, notably, through the growth of a market economy, the introduction of modern secular education, and the spread of urbanization and communication networks. The effect of such changes was to provide avenues for individual mobility, whether in business, small-scale industry, the bureaucracy, or the independent professions. Those who successfully exploited these opportunities came to form new elites. Admittedly, they were drawn almost exclusively from certain segments of Indian society, but it should be emphasized that they were open elites, with individual achievement the hallmark of their status.

Another characteristic of these elites should also be noted: they were essentially urban groups whose values, and even life styles to an extent, were modified by the influence of their environment. Urbanization was one important feature in the transformation which colonial rule effected in nineteenth

century India. Towns had grown up to meet the needs of administration, trade, and communications. Some of these towns, like Madura, were ancient dynastic capitals while others, like Madras, were almost entirely colonial creations. Whether old or new, these urban centers became magnets, attracting people from the surrounding countryside in search of work, education, or release from the constraints of the traditional social system. Equally, these centers provided the arena for new and exciting forms of interaction and association among people of diverse social and economic backgrounds.

Hodgkin's point about the role of new towns in Africa applies with equal force to the towns of colonial India:⁴

By providing opportunities for a greater degree of specialisation, towns enable men (and women) to acquire new skills and powers. By mixing men from a variety of social backgrounds they make possible the discovery of new points of contact and interest. Around these interests there develops a network of new associations, through which for the first time men come to think of their problems as social rather than personal; as capable of solution by human action rather than part of the natural order.

If urban centers became focal points where new forms of social relationships could be explored and developed, the initiative and direction behind much of this activity came from the new elites which the Western impact had brought into existence. These elites not only assumed positions of secular leadership in their society but also formulated programs which offered challenges to the policies and actions of the colonial rulers.

It was the professional elite which displayed a strong sense of attachment to the ideals of Indian nationalism. This can be briefly explained. The professional elite represented the third

generation since British power was established in South India. Its cohesion stemmed from its common social origins, its shared educational background, and its association with one or another of the independent professions which became important during the nineteenth century. Ambitious and resourceful, this elite sought outlets for its talents in local bodies, statutory boards, educational institutions, and cultural and literary societies. At the same time, it pressed for changes in the colonial administration, calling for greater Indian participation in the executive and legislative organs of government. Doubtless, self-interest dictated this demand, for the desired changes would not only strengthen the elite's role in government but would also enhance its political stature in South India. In a more indirect way, it could also be argued that the castes from which the elite was recruited would predictably augment their influence in society.

However, having said this, it ought not to be inferred that the nationalist demands of this elite sprang from any conscious effort to conserve or improve the position of the prescriptive groups from which it was drawn. Such a view fails to take into account the psychological and political urges that prompted the elite to espouse the cause of nationalism. The decision of the professional elite to link Madras Presidency with the mainstream of all-India nationalism stemmed primarily from a deeply-felt conviction that the peoples of India should not remain permanently chained to a position of political subordination to an alien regime. Such a situation was deemed to be offensive to notions of racial pride and self-respect, as well as detrimental to the material advancement of the country as a whole. The professional elite, secure in its belief that it had the intellectual and political resources to provide creative leadership, argued forcibly for changes in the colonial administrative system to ensure that the subject peoples be more closely associated in the affairs of

government. Such changes were also regarded to be fully consistent with past British pledges to equip Indians in the difficult and challenging task of self-government.

Two factors acted as catalysts in persuading the professional elite to enter the threshold of nationalist politics during the 1880s. First, the elite was antagonized by the unpopular policies and actions of the Madras administration under the governorship of Grant Duff. A capricious proconsul, Grant Duff gave free rein to his official subordinates to exercise discretionary authority over sensitive communal and economic issues. The effect of such actions was to cause a breach between the local administration and the articulate sections of public opinion in the Presidency. The second factor which precipitated matters was the European opposition to the Ilbert Bill. The political explosion that erupted over this issue aggravated racial tensions in the country. Indian politicians became resentful of the fact that the small European minority was not only seeking to influence official policies in its favor but was also hoping to legitimize the myth of white supremacy in the eyes of the British Indian government. Although racial passions did not reach dangerous proportions, largely on account of Ripon's immense popularity with the Indians, the political situation in the country had undergone an almost qualitative change. The birth of the Congress in the wake of the Ilbert Bill episode was but one expression of this changed political climate.

The nationalist movement which emerged in South India with the advent of the Congress bore characteristics not untypical of similar movements in colonial Asia and Africa. There was a marked bitterness about racial prejudices and inequalities; a certain antipathy towards the European; a passionate attachment to the ideal of national honor and well-being; and an unquestioned assumption that the educated elements should provide leadership to the movement. However, it should not be assumed

that the nationalists deliberately fostered anti-European sentiment or that there was a conscious rejection of everything European. Far from it. The Congress, after all, owed its birth largely to the efforts of an European. Equally, Congress leaders went out of their way to acknowledge their debt to British rule and pledged to model their political institutions on the image of the West.

Nationalism in South India found its earliest supporters among those elements mobilized under the Western impact. This, however, imposed a major disability upon the way that nationalism developed during the late nineteenth century. Since the mobilized groups came exclusively from certain, upper Hindu castes, it was not surprising that nationalism came to be identified with these castes. Other groups in South India, especially Muslims, Eurasians, and Harijans, regarded the Congress as the creation of the higher Hindu castes seeking political power within the colonial situation. Doubtless, there were preexisting rivalries between these groups, stemming from ethnic, religious, and social factors, which made collaboration between them difficult. However, what gave these rivalries a new dimension was the uneven nature of the Western impact. The upper Hindu castes had generally taken advantage of the opportunities provided by British rule and had maintained, if not improved, their position in the educational, administrative, and economic life of South India.

On the other hand, the Muslims, Eurasians, and Harijans were slower to respond, and there was little overall improvement in their status after almost a century of British rule. Initially, some of these groups blamed the British rulers for their depressed condition. Later, about the time when nationalism dawned in the country, these backward groups began to direct their hostility against the upper Hindu castes, especially the Brahmins. In their eyes, the Congress was an attempt on the part of the dominant higher castes to strengthen further

their position in society, notably, by gaining easier access to the legislative and executive branches of government. Given such suspicions, there was little prospect of the nationalists enlisting the cooperation of the backward groups. In other words, the discontinuities that developed under the British Raj posed major obstacles in the path of the Congress leaders in South India.

The problems of the nationalists were aggravated by the dual strategy which the backward groups employed in their efforts at group uplift. First, backward groups emphasized the importance of group unity as a prerequisite for self-improvement. In South India, appeals for group unity were invariably accompanied by the starting of associations, educational institutions, newspapers, scholarships, and other schemes catering to the interests of the group. Such efforts inevitably strengthened group exclusiveness. Second, it became common practice among groups which had organized in self-defense to demand favored treatment for themselves from the government. The government was urged to accord special educational facilities for each group, reserve places in the administration, and provide separate representation in the legislature. Implicit in this strategy was the belief that the British rulers were in the most efficacious position to help the backward groups in their desire for equality with the advanced groups. It was a strategy which did not augur well for the nationalist movement.

The attitude of the Muslims demonstrated the difficulties which the nationalists encountered in wooing groups which were slow to respond to the Western impact. Congress leaders in South India attached considerable significance to the Muslim community for, as the largest minority in the sub-continent, its reactions would be crucial in determining the national character of the organization. Congress approaches to the Muslims soon brought to the forefront the underlying tensions between them and the Hindus. No doubt, it can be argued that

these tensions were long standing and were the outcome of sharp doctrinal differences and bitter memories of past conflicts. However, what made collaboration between these two groups difficult during the nationalist era was as much their uneven rate of development under the British Raj as it was their historic differences. While the Muslims had lost their empire and gradually had sunk to a position of political obscurity and poverty, the Hindus had registered significant gains and come to occupy a prominent place in the intellectual, professional, administrative, and economic life of the subcontinent. It is little wonder that the Muslims became resentful of their more successful rivals over whom they had once ruled. In this frame of mind, the Muslims were hardly prepared to enter into any kind of a collaboration with the Hindus in the pursuit of nationalist goals.

The Muslim attitude towards the Congress, though dramatized by the importance that the nationalists attached to this community, was in no way unique. Other, similarly placed groups in South India adopted an almost identical posture towards the Congress. The Eurasians, after a brief period of cooperation with the nationalists, withdrew from the Congress, convinced that their interests would be better served by relying upon the goodwill of their colonial rulers. The Harijans, without doubt the most depressed community in South India, also evinced similar hostility towards the Congress. This group had shown early signs of political awakening during the 1890s when its leaders in Madras began to formulate ideas for the advancement of the group. The strategy that was devised was broadly similar to that pursued by the other backward groups. The Harijans founded their own associations, schools, and newspapers; and they appealed to the government to initiate ameliorative measures on behalf of the community. Some Harijan leaders also called for the destruction of the caste system, claiming that it was largely responsible for their degraded condition. Criticisms

were levelled against the higher castes, not only for their past misdeeds but also for their continued efforts to maintain their privileged status in society. The Congress came to be depicted as an instrument of the higher castes, especially Brahmins, to perpetuate their domination over the lower castes.⁵ It was this identification of the Congress with the higher Hindu castes which largely obstructed Harijan participation in the nationalist movement..

It must be noted that the backward groups in South India had by and large acted in isolation in their efforts to attain equality with the more advanced groups. Each group entered the political arena at different times when it became conscious of its depressed status. As more groups became awakened in this way, it was inevitable that an element of competition came to inform their actions, especially as each group pressed its own demands on the government. How far such competition was perceived by the leaders of these groups to be detrimental to their long-term interests is not clear. In any case, during the second decade of the twentieth century, some non-Brahmin groups decided to band together in a concerted bid to overthrow the dominance of the Brahmins in the administrative and political life of South India. The formation of the South Indian Liberal Federation in 1916 inaugurated an era of sharpening conflict between the nationalists and certain sectional interests seeking group uplift by capturing executive and legislative power at the provincial level.⁶

These facts bring into focus some of the disabilities under which nationalism functioned in South India. However, it should not be assumed that these disabilities were in any sense peculiar to India; similar contradictions have, in varying degrees, characterized nationalist movements throughout Asia and Africa. Today, when the nationalist struggles in the third world have been more or less successfully concluded, the problem of resolving these contradictions remains. In other

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words, the disabilities under which the nationalists labored during the colonial era have now come to haunt the leaders of free Asia and Africa. The extent to which these social tensions are overcome will determine whether the political map of the third world will require any drastic revision in the years to come.

APPENDIX

Appendix
Officeholders of the Madras Mahajana Sabha, 1886-1887

Name	Year of Birth	District of Birth	Caste or Communal Affiliation
1. P. Rangiah Naidu	1828	Madras	non-Brahmin
2. S. Subramania Iyer	1842	Madura	Brahmin
3. P. Somasundram Chetty	1824	Madras	non-Brahmin
4. P. Savalay Ramaswamy Mudaliar	1840	Pondicherry	non-Brahmin
5. R. Balaji Rao	1842	Tanjore	Brahmin
6. A. Sabapathy Mudaliar	1838	Bellary	non-Brahmin
7. C. Ramachandra Rao	1845	Tanjore	Brahmin
8. M. Jagga Rao Pillay	?	?	Indian Christian
9. P. Kotaswamy Devar	?	Madura	non-Brahmin
10. S. Pulney Andy	1831	?	Indian Christian
11. P. Gurumurti Iyer	?	?	Brahmin
12. C. Subramania Iyer	1855	Tanjore	Brahmin
13. C. Sankaran Nair	1857	Malabar	non-Brahmin
14. Salem Ramaswamy Mudaliar	1852	Salem	non-Brahmin
15. Gulam Dastagir Saheb	?	?	Muslim
16. P. S. Subramania Iyer	1864	Tanjore	Brahmin
17. P. Subramania Iyer	?	?	Brahmin
18. P. V. Krishnaswamy Chetty	?	?	non-Brahmin

Note: - - - indicates nil
 ? indicates not available

Educational and/or Professional Qualification (with year of graduation)	Occupation	Honorary or Elective Posts Held in Statutory and Public Bodies
Proficient's certificate (1851) Pleader's Test (1856)	Vakil, Madras High Court	Chingleput District Board Member; Municipal Commissioner, Madras
B.L.(1868)	Vakil, Madras High Court	Municipal Commissioner, Madura; Member of Madras Legislative Council
---	Merchant, Madras	Municipal Commissioner, Madras; Trustee, Pachaiyappa Charities
---	Dubash, Arbuthnot & Co., Madras	Sheriff of Madras, Municipal Commissioner, Madras
B.L.(1869)	Vakil, Madras High Court	Municipal Commissioner, Madras; Fellow, Madras University
---	Merchant and industrialist, Bellary	Municipal Commissioner, Bellary
B.L.(1870)	Vakil, Madras High Court	---
B.A.(1866); B.L.(1870)	Vakil, Madras High Court	---
---	Landlord	Committee Member, Madura People's Association
M.D.(?)	Medical Practitioner, Madras	---
B.A.(1872); B.L.(1874)	Vakil, Madras High Court	---
B.A.(1877)	Journalist, Madras	Committee Member, Triplicane Literary Society
B.A.(1875); B.L.(1879)	Vakil, Madras High Court	Member, Malabar Land Tenure Commission
B.A.(1871); M.A.(1873); B.L.(1875)	Vakil, Madras High Court	Secretary, Madras Native Association; Municipal Commissioner, Madras
---	Merchant, Madras	---
B.A.(1882); B.L.(1884)	Vakil, Madras High Court	Committee Member, Mylapore Athenaeum
---	Articled clerk, Madras	---
B.A.(1867); B.L.(1872)	Vakil, Madras High Court	---

Appendix (con't)

Officeholders of the Madras Mahajana Sabha, 1886-1887

Name	Year of Birth	District of Birth	Caste or Communal Affiliation
19. P. Ananda Charlu	1843	North Arcot	Brahmin
20. M. Viraraghava Chari	1857	Chingleput	Brahmin
21. C. V. Sundram Sastri	1848	North Arcot	Brahmin
22. K. P. Sarkara Menon	?	Malabar	non-Brahmin
23. K. Subba Rao	?	Tanjore	Brahmin
24. P. Thengaroya Chetty	1852	?	non-Brahmin
25. T. Nemberumal Chetty	?	?	non-Brahmin
26. G. Mahadeva Chetty	?	?	non-Brahmin
27. P. Ethirajulu Naidu	?	?	non-Brahmin
28. T. V. Seshagiri Iyer	1860	?	Brahmin
29. T. Chellapa Naicker	?	?	non-Brahmin
30. K. Naraina Rao	?	?	Brahmin
31. Abboi Naidu	?	?	non-Brahmin
32. C. Singavavelu Mudaliar	?	?	non-Brahmin
33. A. Balakrishna Mudaliar	?	?	non-Brahmin
34. A. Danakoti Mudaliar	?	?	non-Brahmin
35. R. Balakrishna Chetty	?	?	non-Brahmin
36. C. Bthirajulu Naidu	?	?	non-Brahmin

Sources: Indian Mirror, 20 October 1886; V. L. Sastri, ed., Encyclopaedia of the Madras Presidency and the adjacent states (Madras, 1921); Administration report of the Madras Municipality, 1878-86; University of Madras, Calendar for 1893-94, I; Asylum Press Almanac & Compendium of Intelligence, 1868, 1875, 1880 and 1886.

Note: - - - indicates nil
 ? indicates not available

Educational and/or Professional Qualification (with year of graduation)	Occupation	Honorary or Elective Posts Held in Statutory and Public Bodies
B.L.(1869)	Vakil, Madras High Court	Vice-President, Triplicane Literary Society; Municipal Commissioner, Madras
B.A.(1877)	Journalist, Madras	Committee Member, Triplicane Literary Society
B.A.(1869); B.L.(1872)	Vakil, Madras High Court	Municipal Commissioner, Madras
B.A.(1878); B.L.(1881)	Vakil, Madras High Court	---
B.A.(1888)	Journalist, Madras	---
B.A.(?)	Merchant, Madras	Municipal Commissioner, Madras
B.A.(1879)	Building contractor, Madras	---
---	Merchant, Madras	---
---	Dubash, Madras	Municipal Commissioner, Madras
B.A.(1881); B.L.(1885)	Vakil, Madras High Court	Committee Member, Triplicane Literary Society
---	Retired district munsif	---
B.A.(1881); B.L.(1884)	Vakil, Madras High Court	---
---	Merchant, Madras	---
---	Merchant, Madras	Municipal Commissioner, Madras; Trustee of Pachaiyappa Charities
---	Merchant, Madras	---
---	Landlord, Madras	Municipal Commissioner, Madras; Board member, Monegar Choultry
---	Merchant, Madras	Municipal Commissioner, Madras
---	Merchant, Madras	Municipal Commissioner, Madras; Board member, Monegar Choultry

